NATION

111 killed as gusty winds, heavy rains batter UP

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Wholesale price inflation highest in 3.5 years

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SPORTS

CSK look to continue playoffs push against LSG

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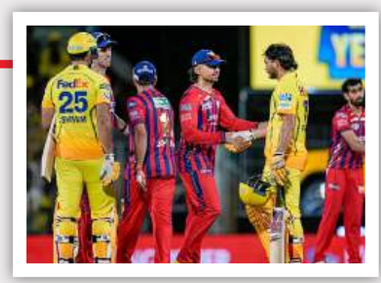

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India bans sugar exports till 30 Sept amid ethanol blending

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

India has banned sugar exports with immediate effect until September 30, a move aimed at boosting domestic availability and containing prices amid supply concerns.

The decision comes as production pressures mount, including the diversion of sugarcane towards ethanol blending programmes, which has reduced the raw material available for sugar output. India is also facing a second consecutive year of tight supply, with output estimated at 27.5 million tonnes against consumption demand of about 28 million tonnes, raising concerns over falling stocks.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said the export policy for sugar—covering raw, white and refined varieties—has been changed from "restricted" to "prohibited" until September 30, 2026, or until further orders. Earlier, exports required a licence under the restricted category.

The ban will not apply to shipments to the European Union under CXL arrangements and to the United States under Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) commitments, which allow limited duty-free or concessional exports. Exports under advance authorisation, government-to-government deals and consignments already in the pipeline are also exempted. India had earlier permitted nearly 16 lakh tonnes of sugar exports in the 2025–26 marketing year, though actual shipments are expected to be lower at 7.5–8 lakh tonnes. The Indian Sugar and Bio-energy Manufacturers Association estimates production at 29.3 million tonnes after ethanol diversion, compared to 26.12 million tonnes last year. *—PTI*

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India asks US for waiver to buy Russian crude

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

India has reportedly approached the United States to extend its waiver on Russian oil imports as the Strait of Hormuz continues to see disruptions, straining oil supplies across the world.

The US had first cleared the arrangement in March and expanded it later, with the current authorisation set to remain valid until 16 May.

The waiver was introduced to help stabilise oil markets by allowing additional crude supplies. While Russian oil is not under blanket sanctions, Washington has repeatedly urged India to reduce discounted purchases as part of efforts to pressure Moscow over the war in Ukraine.

With the West Asian crisis that began on 28 February intensifying, Indian officials have told Washington that securing a stable energy supply remains a priority.

In April, the US extended the sanctions waiver on Russian oil, giving relief to countries importing Russian crude. A fresh licence allowed the purchase of Russian oil that was already loaded onto ships. *—Agencies*

BRICS: India slams sanctions

At summit, Delhi seeks free Hormuz passage; flags concerns over Iran war

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

India on Thursday voiced grave concerns over the West Asia crisis, warning of its impact on energy supplies and maritime stability in the Strait of Hormuz. It also urged BRICS nations to develop "practical ways" to navigate geopolitical upheavals, trade disruptions and unilateral sanctions.

Opening the two-day BRICS Foreign Ministers' conclave in New Delhi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called for "safe and unimpeded maritime flows" through international waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Hormuz remained open to commercial vessels, though ships were required to coordinate with Iranian naval forces, Araghchi blamed the US for what he described as an "illegal blockade" on Iranian ports and said Tehran had not obstructed maritime movement.

Jaishankar said India stood ready to contribute constructively to de-escalation efforts. Stressing that "peace cannot be piecemeal", he said it was essential to uphold international law, protect civilians and avoid targeting public infrastructure.

He said ongoing conflicts and global instability were weakening growth prospects and creating severe pressures on energy, food and fertiliser security, particularly for developing countries. Reliable supply chains and diversified markets, he added, were essential for economic resilience. Diplomatic tensions reportedly surfaced during one of the sessions, with heated exchanges between Araghchi and UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is learnt to have intervened to calm the situation.

Iranian FM Abbas Araghchi met PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi amid Brics summit on Thursday—*PTI*

India supports two-state Palestine solution

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar expressed concern over the continuing conflict in West Asia, stressing the need for a two-state solution to the Israel–Palestine issue. He said India supports a two-state framework. Jaishankar also highlighted wider regional instability, noting that Lebanon and Syria continue to face challenges. He said the conflict in Sudan has imposed a heavy human cost, while Yemen presents humanitarian concerns and maritime risks. Stability in Libya, he added, remains important. *—PTI*

Delhi fumes as Indian vessel sinks after strike off Oman

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

An India-flagged vessel sank after being hit near a strategic shipping corridor, officials said on Thursday, amid continuing tensions in West Asia affecting maritime traffic.

Haji Ali, an Indian dhow or mechanised sailing vessel, came under attack in Omani waters early Wednesday while travelling from Somalia to Sharjah.

The vessel caught fire and later sank, said Mukesh Mangal, Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. All 14 crew members were rescued by the Omani Coast Guard and taken to Dibba Port. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) called the incident "unacceptable", though the attacker has not been identified.

Meanwhile, two India-bound LPG tankers—Symi and NV Sunshine—successfully crossed the Strait of Hormuz despite heightened regional tensions. Symi, carrying 19,965 tonnes of LPG, is expected at Kandla on 16 May, while NV Sunshine, with 46,427 tonnes for Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), is due at New Mangalore on 18 May. *—PTI*

Soon after, Jaishankar asked the newer BRICS members to fully subscribe to the bloc's consensus mechanism.

Iran and the UAE have clashed in recent weeks over alleged Iranian attacks on UAE energy infrastructure, disagreements that have prevented BRICS from issuing a joint statement on the crisis.

Addressing the conclave, Araghchi urged BRICS nations to explicitly condemn what he described as violations of international law by the US and Israel. Calling Iran a victim of "illegal expansionism and warmongering", he said Tehran would never surrender to external pressure.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi later met several visiting foreign ministers, including Lavrov, Araghchi, Brazil's Mauro Vieira and South Africa's Ronald Lamola. *—PTI*

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SAFFRON SHAWLS NOT ALLOWED IN K'TAKA SCHOOLS, SAYS CM

MYSURU, 14 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah clarified on Thursday that saffron shawls would not be allowed in educational institutions as per the state government's order on religious symbols, while practices already in existence like the hijab, turbans, rudraksha beads and sacred threads (Janeu) would be permitted.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru, the Chief Minister clarified that religious attires which are in practice will be allowed.

The Karnataka government on Wednesday passed an order allowing students to wear the hijab, sacred thread, Shivadhara, and Rudraksha in schools. The order scrapped the BJP government's 2022 order, banning Hijab in government schools following the Hijab versus saffron shawl controversy.

The opposition flayed the move and termed it "appeasement politics."

A section of Hindu organisations have threatened to wear saffron shawls in schools. Now the Chief Minister has clarified that saffron shawls will not be permitted. *—PTI*

NEET aspirant kills self in UP over exam cancellation

LAKHIMPUR KHERI, 14 MAY

A 21-year-old NEET aspirant died by suicide in his house in Gangotrinagar, over the cancellation of the NEET following a paper leak, a family member said. Ritik Mishra, in his third attempt, was confident of success, his father stated. No suicide note was recovered; however, his family blamed the cancellation. Ritik, from Hasanpur Katauli village, had returned to the city on Wednesday and was distressed. His father, Anoop Mishra, said, "Ritik was under immense stress after the NEET exams were cancelled." The body was sent for autopsy.

The CBI has arrested five suspects. *—PTI*

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>>>More on Page 4

Congress ends suspense, Satheesan is Keralam CM

NEW DELHI/T'PURAM, 14 MAY

Congress on Thursday named V D Satheesan as the next Chief Minister of Keralam, ending days of suspense over leadership after the party-led UDF's sweeping win in the April 9 Assembly elections.

The 61-year-old Paravoor MLA emerged ahead of AICC general secretary KC Venugopal and senior leader Ramesh Chennithala in the three-way race. The decision was announced in New Delhi by AICC Keralam in-charge Deepa Dasmunsi along with central observers Ajay Maken and Mukul Wasnik.

Soon after, the Congress Legislature Party met in Thiruvananthapuram and unanimously ratified his election. Satheesan later met Governor Rajendra Arlekar and submitted the list of supporting MLAs. The swearing-in is expected on Monday.

Satheesan said the government would honour poll promises and work to improve living standards. He thanked Rahul Gandhi, Venugopal and Chennithala, and pledged a "new era" in Keralam politics.

Meanwhile, former CM Pinarayi Vijayan was elected as the CPI(M) legislature party leader. After being elected as the CPI(M) legislature party leader, Vijayan is likely to be chosen as the Leader of the Opposition. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3, 5

Congress workers offer sweets to CM-designate VD Satheesan in Thiruvananthapuram after he was selected as the CM on Thursday —*PTI*

US may drop $265M fraud case against Adani

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

US authorities are moving to drop fraud charges against billionaire industrialist **Gautam Adani** for an alleged $265 million bribery and securities fraud case, according to a Bloomberg report.

The US Justice Department is expected to withdraw the criminal case as this week, while the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is reportadly working towards settling a parallel civil fraud case filed in November 2024, according to Bloomberg

New York prosecutors accused Adani, his nephew Sagar Adani and former Adani Green Energy CEO Vneet Jaain of a bribery scheme involving payments to Indian officials to secure contracts linked to India's largest solar power project.

Investigators claim the contracts would generate nearly $2 billion in profits over 20 years. Prosecutors also claimed the accused raised over $3 billion through loans and bond offerings while concealing alleged corruption from investors.

Adani founded the Adani Group in 1988, creating India's largest infrastructure conglomerates spanning ports, airports, mining, power and logistics. *—Agencies*

SIR drive in K'taka, 16 states from 30 May

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The Election Commission announced the third phase phase rollout of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls three Union Territories and 16 states including Karnataka, beginning 30 May.

The exercise will cover 36.73 crore voters, schedule designed to coordinate with ongoing Census house listing .

The states and UTs involved are Delhi, Odisha, Mizoram, Sikkim, Manipur, Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh, Telangana, Punjab, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Tripura, Dadar and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. Punjab, Jharkhand, Karnataka, and Telangana are opposition-ruled.

Over 3.94 lakh booth-level officers (BLOs) will conduct house visits, assisted by 3.42 lakh booth-level agents (BLAs) appointed by political parties. The schedule for Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh will be announced later due to weather conditions.

This will not complete Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

The final rolls will be published on different dates, starting with Odisha, Sikkim, Mizoram, and Manipur on 6 September, and ending with Tripura on 23 December.

Delhi, Meghalaya, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Jharkhand rolls will be published on 7 October. *—PTI*

HAD ASKED MAN FOR TIME

Woman gangraped in moving Delhi bus

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

A 30-year-old woman was allegedly dragged inside a private sleeper bus and raped by the driver and conductor in Delhi's Mangolpuri area, police said on Thursday. The two have been arrested.

The assault, which brought back memories of the Delhi gangrape-murder of a 23-year-old who came to be known as Nirbhaya, took place on 11 May. The arrests took place the following day.

Police said the woman was returning home after working at a factory in Mangolpuri. When she reached near the B-Block bus stand in Saraswati Vihar, she saw a man standing near the bus door and asked him the time. The man then allegedly dragged her inside the bus, drove the vehicle towards Nangloi and raped her.

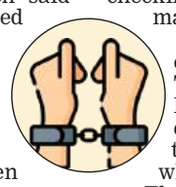
The woman who is married and has three children said that both the men raped her.

The bus was stationed near the Nangloi metro station while the woman was assaulted, a police officer said.

The bus has been seized.

"The Rani Bagh police station recorded the woman's statement immediately and an FIR was registered on 12 May," DCP (Outer) Vikram Singh said.

While one of them was arrested immediately after the FIR was registered, the other was nabbed four hours later. The investigators are checking if the bus had automatic doors.



Sahil Malhotra, the owner of the Royal Traveller and Cargo Bus, said that he assisted the police to reach the driver's house, from where he was arrested.

The survivor's husband told reporters that she had minor injuries on her face and hands. *— PTI*

Cal HC raps WB govt over post poll attacks

KOLKATA, 14 MAY

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday issued interim directions to the West Bengal Police, asking it to ensure the safe return of persons allegedly displaced from their shops, homes or properties in post-poll violence cases following the 2026 Assembly election results, irrespective of political affiliation.

A division bench of Justice Sujoy Paul and Justice Partha Sarathi Sen said police must ensure that any citizen illegally evicted from property due to post-poll violence is restored safely, without regard to party alignment. *—PTI*

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Fit certificate must for animal slaughter in WB

KOLKATA, 14 MAY

The West Bengal government has issued fresh guidelines mandating a "fit certificate" before any animal slaughter, warning of penal action for violations.

The order states that bulls, bullocks, cows, calves and buffaloes must be examined for age and physical condition before approval. Only animals above 14 years or those permanently incapacitated due to injury, deformity or incurable disease will be eligible for slaughter.

Slaughter in open public spaces has been strictly prohibited. Certificates must be jointly issued by municipal or panchayat authorities and a government veterinary surgeon, in line with the West Bengal Animal Slaughter Control Act, 1950 and High Court directions of 2018 and 2022. Approved animals may be slaughtered only in designated facilities. Violations can attract up to six months' imprisonment or a Rs 1,000 fine, and offences will be cognisable. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3 & 4

—ANI

Guv to halve convoy size after PM's austerity call

BENGALURU, 14 MAY

Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Thursday reduced the size of his official convoy to the minimum required strength following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's austerity call. The Lok Bhavan stated on X Gehlot had taken the step in response to the Prime Minister's appeal for fuel conservation and reduction in foreign exchange expenditure amid the West Asia crisis. The move comes days after Modi, while addressing a rally organised by the BJP in Hyderabad, called for several measures aimed at conserving foreign exchange and reducing dependence on imports amid tensions in West Asia. Modi himself has cut his convoy size, while calling upon people to work from home and refrain from buying gold. *—PTI*

Bidadi township is just official real estate business, says HDK

Says project cost has been inflated, farmers in 7,481 acres stand to lose

BENGALURU, 14 MAY

Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries HD Kumaraswamy on Thursday accused the State government of turning the proposed Greater Bengaluru township project near Bidadi into an "official real estate business by taking away farmers' land" with projected revenue of over Rs 33,000 crore for 15 years. He demanded that the land acquisition be stopped, stating that the JD(S) stood with farmers.

He was referring to the Rs 18,133 crore Greater Bengaluru Integrated Suburban Project at Bidadi in Bengaluru South district, approved in the 30 April Cabinet meeting. The project will cover 7,481 acres across nine villages in Bengaluru South and Ramanagara taluk.

Kumaraswamy told reporters at JD(S) office in Bengaluru that the government was targeting fertile agricultural land in eight villages under the guise of townships and business corridors. He said the affected villages included Byramangala, Hosur and Kanchakarahalli in Bidadi of the erstwhile Ramanagara Assembly constituency.

Union Heavy Industries and Steel Minister HD Kumaraswamy addresses a press conference, in Bengaluru, on Thursday *—PTI*

The Union Minister said during his tenure as chief minister in 2006, he had proposed integrated townships around Bengaluru and had planned five at places including Hoskote, Solur and Satnur. It was to decongest Bengaluru and was discussed with farmers, unlike the present project.

He claimed that the current government was reviving old township concepts only for commercial gains and questioned why earlier a fact-finding committee reports opposing such projects had not been placed before the Cabinet.

- Kumaraswamy alleged that many of the projects that the Congress government is pushing now had been proposed when he was the CM. But the cost estimates are not the same.

Kumaraswamy said the government was offering only Rs 2 crore to Rs 2.25 crore per acre to farmers in some places despite earlier land valuations around Eagleton Township being fixed at nearly Rs 12 crore.

"On what basis was Rs 12 crore fixed then, and why are farmers now being offered only Rs 2 crore?" he asked questioning claims that 80 per cent of landowners had consented.

Kumaraswamy said he had proposed a tunnel road from Minsk Square to Hebbal through a Korean company at an estimated cost of Rs 30 crore and had later approved an elevated corridor project from Silk Board to KR Puram with a Rs 9,000 crore allocation. Similar projects were now being pursued at vastly inflated costs.

He said protesting farmers had been prevented from entering the Deputy Commissioner's office and that the government was threatening compulsory acquisition if farmers refused.

"There has been no social impact assessment. That is mandatory. The DC never visited any village," he added.

He also questioned the government's claims that AI cities and industrial projects would create meaningful employment for rural youth and women dependent on agriculture and milk production. *—PTI*

DKS praises Bagamane during its NSE debut

MUMBAI, 14 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar praised the progress and achievement of Bengaluru-based Bagmane Group on its listing on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) on its debut, saying that the world sees India through Bengaluru.

Speaking at the bell ringing ceremony at the head office of Bagmane in Mumbai on Thursday, he said, "It is a matter of pride for the entire nation. Today marks a new milestone in Bagmane's 30-year journey."

Speaking on Bengaluru, he noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Bengaluru as a "global city" last year during the inauguration of Namma Metro's Yellow Line.

He praised Bengaluru's talent, community and climate, boasting that about 80 per cent — nearly 16 lakh engineers — working along a single 16 km stretch of road in the City.

"Bagmane too has grown enormously, creating vast opportunities. It has 200 million square feet of Grade A office space — the largest in India and third largest in the world" he said. *—Salar News*

—ANI

Siddaramaiah congratulates new Keralam CM

BENGALURU, 14 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has congratulated VD Satheesan on being named the next Keralam Chief Minister, expressing his desire to work with him to uphold federalism and shared interests. Satheesan, a six-term MLA and former Opposition Leader from 2021 to 2026, was appointed by the Congress as Keralam's leader, ending suspense. Siddaramaiah praised Satheesan's extensive legislative experience and commitment, stating he began his public life through NSUI student politics. He expressed confidence that under Satheesan, Kerala would focus on secularism, social justice, welfare, and inclusive development. He added, "I look forward to working closely with him to uphold the spirit of federalism and protect the shared interests of Karnataka, Keralam and our people." *—PTI*

Man found with towel around neck, murder probe on

YADGIR, 14 MAY

The body of 51-year-old Lakshman Rao Penumurthy, a resident of Golconda, Hyderabad, was discovered in a hotel room on Wednesday, with a towel tightly wrapped around his neck. The incident is suspected to be a murder, with police stating he was strangled. Lakshman Rao arrived in Yadgir on 10 May with his sister Varalakshmi and brother-in-law Venkataratna, checking into SDN Hotel at 1.30pm. He claimed to be in Yadgir for a land deal, using only his Aadhaar as proof. The visitors left on 12 May at 4.30pm., but Lakshman Rao's body was found after hotel staff failed to contact him and found the room locked. Police are investigating motives, including land disputes, and searching for the missing companions who withdrew money before vanishing. *—SALAR NEWS*

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WAREHOUSE UP IN FLAMES

A massive fire broke out at a plastic warehouse in Nayandahalli, Outer Ring Road, in Bengaluru on Thursday, damaging lakhs worth of property. Tonnes of plastic scrap, old pipes and other plastic items were stored in the warehouse, but thankfully no casualties were reported. *—SALAR*

Hijab row: BYV says lift 'Tuglaq order'

BENGALURU, 14 MAY

The Opposition BJP came down heavily on the Congress government's decision to overturn the 2022 school uniform order, had banned students from wearing hijabs.

State BJP President **BY Vijayendra** condemned the Congress' move saying on X that it was "nothing short of the epitome of utter folly". He called upon Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to "withdraw your Tughlaq-like order, which allows children to wear the hijab while imposing a ban on wearing the saffron shaw".

Vijayendra argued that the point of school uniforms was to foster equality and unity among students. However, allowing students "to wear attire that represents communal symbols is tantamount to … fanning the flames of communalism."

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi echoed Vijayendra's charge.

"Even as petitions related to the hijab controversy remain pending before the Supreme

Court's constitutional bench, the government's decision to withdraw the hijab ban while disregarding judicial processes amounts to an insult to the judicial system," he stated on X. "Even as a uniform civil code is being implemented across the country, the Congress government in Karnataka has resorted to a policy of divide and rule along religious lines."He argued that the saffron shawl was not religious, and hence the State government was being authoritarian by prohibiting it.

However, the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind party commended the Congress' decision. Mohammed Saad Belgami, Ameer-e-Halqa of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Karnataka, said it would help girl Muslim students pursue education without fear. *—Salar News*

Govt launches portal to track substandard medicines

BENGALURU, 14 MAY

Karnataka has launched a digital monitoring portal to track substandard medicines and curb misuse of narcotic drugs, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said on Thursday.

Developed by the Food Safety and Drug Administration, the system tracks Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) drug batches across stockists and wholesalers. Once flagged, such batches are automatically locked, preventing sale and enabling real-time recall.

Rao said earlier there was no mechanism to withdraw substandard drugs already in circulation. "There was no system to recall those medicines… we had no control over medicines that had already entered the market," he said.

The portal, currently covering about 15,000 stockists, sends instant alerts and freezes stock across the supply chain. Authorities plan to expand it to 45,000 retailers and pharmacists.

The system will also monitor drugs under the NDPS Act by requiring pharmacies to upload sales data, enabling authorities to track prescriptions, detect irregularities and act against misuse. *—PTI*

68 villages in Bidar face water shortages

BIDAR, 14 MAY

Forest and Bidar district in-charge Minister Eshwar B Khandre said on Thursday that 68 villages under 38 Gram Panchayats in the district are currently facing water shortages. He said that water is being supplied through tankers in 19 locations and through rented borewells in 59 places.

The situation is more severe in 22 villages of Aurad taluk and 18 villages of Bhalki taluk. However, he clarified that there is no drinking water crisis in urban areas of the district.

Speaking to reporters after a review meeting held at the Zilla Panchayat hall, he said that Rs 4 crore has already been released to ensure there is no drinking water scarcity during the summer, with the monsoon expected to arrive around 15 June.

He announced that a Rs 7,000 crore permanent drinking water project is being prepared to supply water from the Narayanpur Reservoir to villages in Bidar and Kalaburagi districts, which would prevent water scarcity for the 25 years. *—Salar News*

Priyank alleges BJP link in NEET leak

BENGALURU, 14 MAY

IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge alleged that there was a prominent connection between the BJP and the recent leak of the NEET exam papers, which lead to the cancellation of the entrance exam.

In a post on X, he said that "Dinesh Biwal and Mangilal Biwal brothers are the kingpins of the question paper leak, and they also have connections with big leaders of the BJP".

The Central Bureau for Investigations (CBI) has arrested five people over the link, including the two aforementioned. Dinesh is a member of the BJP's youth wing, the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) in Rajasthan's Jamwaramgarh.

The brothers allegedly purchased the leaked NEET question paper for around Rs 30 lakh.

"The truth has come out that the BJP leaders are behind the NEET question paper leak, which has ruined the lives of more than 23 lakh youth community of the country carrying dreams of the future," Priyank alleged. "By the way, another sad fact is that the name of the head of the National Testing Agency was also heard in the Vyapam scam!"

The Vyapam scam refers to a decades long scam in Madhya Pradesh to manipulate test results.

"No scam in the country is complete without the contribution of the BJP," Priyank quipped. *—Salar News*

M'luru college student held for peddling Rs 35 lakh hydro ganja

MANGALURU, 14 MAY

Police in Mulki, Dakshina Kannada, have arrested a college student for allegedly transporting hydro ganja worth about Rs 35 lakh, raising concerns over drug trafficking in the coastal region.

The accused, a final-year BCA student from Sagar taluk in Shivamogga district, was detained on 12 May near Mulki Railway Station following a tip-off. Police said they seized 1.042 kg of hydro weed, along with a mobile phone and other materials linked to the operation. Investigators believe she sourced the drugs from Chennai and transported them by train or bus to sell to students and youth. She has prior cases registered at Kavoor police station and by Customs at KIA. *—Salar News*

JUICE BREAK DURING ROUNDS

Congress MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister SIddaramaiah, Mysuru district in-charge Minister HC Mahadevappa and others drink juice at a hotel in Mysuru during inspections of various development works. The CM saw that 40 per cent of the Rs 129-crore suburban bus stand at Banni Mantap, being built over 14 acres, had been completed. The project aims to decongest the Bengaluru–Nilgiris Road corridor. He saw that 50 per cent of the Rs 588-crore underground cabling project by the Chamundeshwari Electricity Supply Corporation had been done. He inspected white topping on 12 arterial roads spanning 46.9 km at a cost of Rs 400 crore, and Rs 219-crore upgrades at Maharani colleges, which aim to add hostel capacity for 1,400 students. *—SALAR*

LIFELINE FOR THE TOWN

'Mango capital' in Kolar prepares for trading season

KOLAR, 14 MAY

Srinivaspur in Kolar district is preparing for the annual mango trading season beginning on 15 May, bringing renewed activity to one of the country's most prominent mango-growing belts.

Known as the "Mango Capital," the town is expected to witness hectic commercial activity over the next three months, with farmers, traders, labourers and transport operators banking heavily on the seasonal economy. The region has earned a reputation for producing premium mango varieties such as Badami, Mallika, Baneesh, Imam Pasand, Pasha Pasand and Kesar.

Mango cultivation, spread across nearly 65,000 acres in and around Srinivaspur, remains the lifeline of the local rural economy.

ECONOMIC BOOST

Preparations for the three month trading season are nearing completion at the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) yard and private marketplaces, where authorities have undertaken improvements in weighing, storage and transport infrastructure to facilitate smooth operations.

The town is likely to host around 130 to 140 mango shops this year, with nearly 90 inside the APMC premises and another 30 to 40 shops outside the yard, said G Srinivas, Secretary of the Srinivaspur APMC.

"Each shop is expected to employ six to eight workers, creating direct seasonal employment for more than 800 people," he said.

Mangoes are grown across 65,000 acres in and around Srinivaspur *—SALAR*

The season also generates large-scale indirect employment.

Nearly a thousand more people are expected to find jobs in mango plucking, grading, sorting, and packing. Women form a significant part of the workforce in sorting and packing units.

Sectors such as transport, retail trade and hospitality are also likely to witness a sharp rise in business activity, further generating employment opportunities for drivers, cleaners and loading workers.

The mango economy has also encouraged several small-scale household industries. In the Indiranagar locality of Srinivasapur, many families prepare pickles and other products using slightly damaged or lower-grade fruits.

MASSIVE MARKETS

During the peak season, truckloads of mangoes are dispatched daily to major markets across Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The region also supplies large quantities of fruit to Chittoor and Madanapalle in Andhra Pradesh, where processing units convert mangoes into pulp, juice and other products.

Varieties, including Badami, Mallika and Baneesh also see demand in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Singapore.Although erratic weather conditions are likely to affect the yield, growers and traders are optimistic that Srinivaspur will once again reinforce itself as one of India's premier mango centres. *—Salar News*

—ANI

2 held for posting 'offensive video' against Suvendu

KOLKATA, 14 MAY

Two online content creators were arrested from Dinhata in West Bengal's Cooch Behar district for allegedly posting an offensive video targeting Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari, a senior police officer said. The duo was detained on Wednesday following complaints that the viral video "contained derogatory and offensive language against the CM". The Dinhata police launched an investigation, leading to their arrest. Preliminary findings suggest they are social media content creators. The police added, "Based on the complaints, they were arrested. Investigation is underway." The police stated, "No individual is permitted to upload content that contains abusive language or hurts religious sentiments. Action will be taken against violators." —*PTI*

Police raid TMC MLA's house over offensive remarks

KOLKATA, 14 MAY

Police launched search operations at two houses of TMC MLA Dilip Mondal in Bishnupur, West Bengal, for making provocative remarks and threats to BJP workers in a viral video. Personnel from Diamond Harbour Police District, aided by central forces, arrived at Mondal's residence at Pailan this morning. The police said, "Searches are being carried out based on specific allegations in FIRs, and all necessary steps are being taken." The videos show Mondal making threatening remarks during a rally. Two FIRs have been registered against the MLA under non-bailable sections. Mondal was not present during the search but was seen earlier in the locality. The police are examining two mobile phones belonging to him. —*PTI*

U'khand Congress leader booked for immolation threat

DEHRADUN, 14 MAY

Uttarakhand Women Congress president Jyoti Rautela and others were booked on Thursday for threatening self-immolation and obstructing public servants during a protest at Parade Ground, police said. Rautela joined a protest by Nursing Ekta Manch demanding year-wise recruitment under Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS). On 11 May, Rautela and supporters climbed atop a water tank. They remained on the tank while others held a dharna below. Rautela allegedly poured petrol and threatened to set herself on fire on 12 May. Police booked Rautela and her supporters under the BNS and Petroleum Act, citing use of inflammable substances to threaten self-harm. —*PTI*

Cong moves HC for former HQ's sale deed execution

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The Delhi HC on Thursday sought the Centre's and Delhi government's response to a petition filed by the Indian National Congress seeking execution of a sale deed for its former headquarters at 7, Jantar Mantar Road. Justice Kaurav issued notices on the petition as well as an application for interim relief, after Congress urged that the premises should not be allotted to any other party. The court questioned the maintainability of the plea, suggesting a civil suit may be required. Senior advocate Singhvi, appearing for the Congress, argued the party has been in possession since 1946, paid Rs 6.1 lakh in 1959, and had all documents. He said requests for a conveyance deed were ignored. Singhvi added delays arose due to the 1969 party split. The court listed the matter for hearing on 14 Sept. —*PTI*

Venugopal backs Satheesan as CM

Chennithala avoids media; IUML hails Satheesan; BJP says CM will be Delhi puppet

T'PURAM/NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal on Thursday said he accepts the party's decision to name VD Satheesan as the chief minister of Keralam, and extended all support to him and the UDF government in the state.

Venugopal, who was among the contenders for the post, said in New Delhi that he would abide by the party high command's decision and work for its implementation. "I humbly accept the party decision. The party is everything for me. I want to die shrouded in the party flag," he said, adding that he would extend full support to the government. He declined to comment on whether any assurances were given to him or whether there was pressure from allies such as the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML).

Ramesh Chennithala and KC Venugopal at the Congress state office in Thiruvananthapuram —*PTI*

- Venugopal, who was among the contenders for the CM's post, said in New Delhi that he would abide by the high command's decision. "I humbly accept the party decision. The party is everything for me. I want to die shrouded in the party flag," he said, adding that he would extend full support to the government

Another contender, Ramesh Chennithala, left his residence in Thiruvananthapuram soon after the announcement. His aides later said he had gone to Guruvayur temple and remained in touch with the party leadership. They denied reports of dissent, saying he had not expressed any objection and would respond after internal consultations. There were also reports that he might skip the Congress Legislature Party meeting, though leaders close to him rejected this.

The IUML, the second-largest constituent in the UDF, welcomed Satheesan's elevation, with state president Sayyid Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal saying the party fully backed the Congress high command's decision. He said the IUML supported a "Team UDF" approach and had been consulted during discussions over the leadership. Senior leader PK Kunhalikutty said further organisational and cabinet-related decisions would be taken after the CLP meeting.

Meanwhile, BJP criticised the decision, alleging that it exposed internal divisions within the Congress. Party spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla claimed the appointment reflected a "remote-controlled government" dictated from Delhi and alleged a leadership tussle among senior Congress leaders. He further claimed that alliance dynamics influenced the decision and compared the situation to other Congress-ruled states, alleging similar factional instability. —*PTI*

'BENGAL NO BULLDOZER STATE'

In HC, Didi alleges police inaction on post-poll attacks

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee leaves after appearing at the Calcutta HC to argue a case in connection with attacks on TMC offices in Kolkata —*PTI*

KOLKATA, 14 MAY

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Thursday told the Calcutta High Court that police remained passive during post-poll violence in West Bengal, while asserting that the state is not a "bulldozer state", as debate intensified over demolition drives against alleged illegal structures.

Appearing in court for the first time in a case related to post-election violence following the 2026 Assembly polls, Banerjee sought urgent judicial intervention to protect affected citizens. Accompanied by senior TMC leaders and advocates Chandrima Bhattacharya and Kalyan Banerjee, she argued that widespread attacks had taken place after the declaration of results.

The TMC chief claimed that at least 10 people were killed, 150–160 party offices were vandalised and around 2,000 incidents of violence were reported across the state. She alleged that FIRs were not being registered and police action remained inconsistent.

"Out of 10 dead, six are Hindus," she submitted, also alleging threats against women and minors, including cases of intimidation involving rape threats. She further said that minority communities and families, including a 92-year-old widow, were targeted in attacks.

She also claimed that fish markets and meat shops were attacked, while party offices were "looted and captured in front of the police".

Referring to demolition drives, she said, "Bengal is not a bulldozer state", arguing that due process must be followed before any action.

The court also heard reference to recent demolitions in Kolkata, including action against an illegal leather unit in Tiljala where a fire killed two people. Separately, a fire in the Hijli Sharif and Khejuri market area destroyed nearly 50–60 shops, with TMC alleging arson. Later, chaotic scenes were reported outside the court as Banerjee faced thief slogans from a section of lawyers while exiting the premises. —*PTI*

Minister vows 24x7 women mobility

West Bengal minister Agnimitra Paul said the state government would ensure that women can move freely at any time of the day, and that priority would be given to complaints lodged by them.

Speaking to reporters after taking oath in the assembly on Wednesday, Paul said CCTV monitoring would soon be introduced across civic bodies to ensure transparency and check corruption.

She also said that elections to the Howrah and Durgapur municipal corporations would be held soon. — PTI

AIADMK groups hold meets, Shanmugam boycotts HQ

CHENNAI, 14 MAY

The AIADMK faction led by Edappadi K Palaniswami met senior leaders on Thursday to discuss their steps after growing differences within the party led to cross-voting during the TVK government's floor test.

The rival faction, led by senior leaders C Ve Shanmugam and SP Velumani also went into a huddle.

The differences between Palaniswami and his party colleagues had spilled over into the TVK government's floor test on Wednesday and the opposition party suffered cross-voting.

With Palaniswami having removed rebel leaders and MLAs including C Ve Shanmugam and SP Velumani, the duo leading the battle against him, from their party posts, both sides went into brain storming sessions with their supporters on Thursday.

Amid the tensions in the AIADMK, the party headquarters, Puratchi Thalaivar MGR Maaligai, came under heavy police security cover, apparently anticipating trouble.

AIADMK sources said the Shanmugam-Velumani group was examining legal options as his group has "more MLAs" —*PTI*

Violence had broken out and the AIADMK headquarters was targeted and damaged during the differences between Palaniswami and then party leader O Panneerselvam over a leadership struggle and internal feud in 2022.

AIADMK sources said the Shanmugam-Velumani faction was planning to consider legal options since his group has "more MLAs" than Palaniswami's legislators.

"They (Shanmugam faction) are also planning to again ask Palaniswami to convene a general council meeting," a senior party functionary said.

Before the meeting, speaking to the media, Shanmugam had asserted that his MLAs and senior leaders will not visit AIADMK headquarters unless his group gets justice. "I will not come to the head office under any circumstance," he said. — *PTI*

TVK govt hikes DA for govt employees

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay announced on Thursday a 2 per cent hike in Dearness Allowances for government employees and teachers.

With the revision, the Dearness Allowance (DA) increased from 58 per cent to 60 per cent, effective from 1 January 2026, an official release said.

The DA hike will result in an additional annual expenditure of Rs 1,230 crore for the TN government. Women beneficiaries covered by 'Kalaignar Magalir Urimai Thogai' will get the May instalment of Rs 1,000 soon, Vijay announced. The amount will be deposited in the accounts of the beneficiaries. —*PTI*

DMK ALLIANCE HAS NOT WEAKENED, SAYS STALIN

The DMK-led alliance has not weakened despite not registering a total victory in the 23 April Assembly election and its ability to garner 1.54 crore votes demonstrated the trust the people of Tamil Nadu have placed on the combine, DMK president MK Stalin said on Thursday.

After election results, most DMK allies openly stated that they would continue their tie-up with the DMK. "This shows the commitment of our allies to the DMK," Stalin said. —*PTI*

Assam ministers get portfolios

GUWAHATI, 14 MAY

The four Assam ministers who took oath along with Chief Minister Himanta Sarma have been allocated portfolios, officials confirmed on Thursday. The governor approved the list sent by the chief minister. The ministers are BJP's Rameshwar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora, and BPF's Charan Boro.

Teli, a former Union minister, has been assigned to Labour Welfare, Tea Tribes, Adivasi Welfare, and Transformation and Development. Neog, previously finance minister, will oversee Women and Child Development and Tourism. Bora, last government's Agriculture Minister, now handles Panchayat and Rural Development, Implementation of Assam Accord, Border Protection and Development, and Excise. Boro retains Transport and Welfare of Bodoland. Until the expansion, CM Sarma will hold all remaining departments. Sarma announced that the ministry would expand after the assembly session ends on 26 May. The four ministers represent the tea tribes (Teli), women (Neog), regional Assamese (Bora), and the Bodos (Boro). The NDA secured a third term with 102 seats, and Sarma was sworn in on 12 May. —*PTI*

The new Assam ministers (from left) BJP's Rameshwar Teli, AGP's Atul Bora, Ajanta Neog (BJP) and BPF's Charan Boro —*PTI*

Judge launches contempt case against Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Delhi High Court's Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma launched criminal contempt proceedings on Thursday against AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Durgesh Pathak, Sanjay Singh, Saurabh Bhardwaj and others over their "vilifying" social media posts against her in connection with the excise policy case.

Justice Sharma said the former Delhi chief minister "orchestrated a calculated campaign" of vilification against her on social media instead of pursuing legal remedies and clarified that the Central Bureau of Investigation's petition against the discharge of all accused persons would now be taken up by another bench of the same court.

The judge took exception to several social media posts by the proposed contemnors that attributed "political allegiance" to her and allegedly targeted her by posting a misleading "edited" video of a speech given by her at an educational institution in Varanasi.

"Arvind Kejriwal sought to destroy my reputation instead of availing legal remedies after I refused to recuse and a deliberate attempt to lower the court's authority can't be permitted in the guise of free speech," Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma said.

She clarified that she was not recusing herself but was only transferring the case to another bench as she has initiated contempt proceedings against Arvind Kejriwal and some others.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Central Bureau of Investigation thanked Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma for upholding the institution's dignity, the majesty of the law, the legal establishment and all those who are connected with it. —*PTI*

TRIPS ABROAD COST RS 60 CR

RaGa's income, foreign trip expenses not matching: BJP

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The BJP on Thursday raised questions over Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's foreign travel, alleging a mismatch between his declared income and expenditure on overseas visits, and demanded disclosure of funding sources.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi, party national spokesperson Sambit Patra claimed Gandhi undertook 54 foreign trips over the last 22 years, with an estimated expenditure of around Rs 60 crore. He said this was inconsistent with Gandhi's declared financial profile in election affidavits.

Patra further alleged that Gandhi's total declared income over the past decade stood at about Rs 11 crore, while his assets increased from Rs 55.38 lakh in 2004 to Rs 20.39 crore in 2024. "While Rs 60 crore was spent on these foreign trips, it does not match his declared assets," he said.

Rahul Gandhi Sambit Patra —*PTI*

He questioned who funded the trips and whether mandatory disclosures had been made under FCRA norms. He also asked whether prior permission from the Ministry of Home Affairs had been obtained for foreign visits funded by external agencies, and whether income tax disclosures had been made.

The BJP leader also alleged that Gandhi had undertaken several "undeclared" foreign visits, citing a CRPF letter to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge in September last year, which reportedly flagged six such trips between December 2024 and September 2025 as violations of security protocol.

Patra further referred to a purported private visit to Muscat, Oman on 3 May 2026, alleging lack of declared itinerary or host details, and suggested it could represent a seventh undeclared trip. —*PTI*

Delhi announces 2-day WFH for govt offices

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Delhi led a nationwide push for fuel conservation on Thursday, announcing sweeping austerity measures including two days of work-from-home for government offices, mandatory Metro travel for ministers and officials on Mondays, and a weekly "no-vehicle day". This was following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal amid global energy concerns linked to West Asia tensions.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said all government departments will adopt the hybrid work model, while the private sector would be encouraged to follow suit. She also announced a 20 per cent cut in petrol and diesel quotas for government officers, a 60 per cent reduction in her convoy size, and suspension of foreign visits by ministers for one year.

In Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath proposed a similar hybrid work framework for employees in large industrial units, IT companies and startups.

> **It's amazing to see members of the government indulge in drama of austerity with cameras perfectly placed to record it**
>
> -Aaditya Thackeray, Sena (UBT)

Maharashtra issued a directive cancelling foreign tours, restricting vehicle rallies and processions, promoting electric vehicles and public transport. It also asked departments to prefer virtual meetings, reduce ad spending and adopt energy-saving practices.

Telangana Governor Shukla announced a 50 per cent reduction in convoy vehicles. In Tripura, Chief Minister Saha ruled out any lockdown but introduced hybrid working for government employees, with 50 per cent of Group C and D staff working from home. —*PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

School bus hits cow dung heap in UP, 10 injured

ALIGARH, 14 MAY

Around 40 school children narrowly escaped injury after their bus overturned on a cow dung heap in UP's Aligarh. The accident happened in a village under Gangiri Police Station when a wheel rolled over a large heap of cow dung on the roadside, causing the vehicle to lose balance.

Additional District Magistrate Pankaj Kumar said about 10 children sustained minor injuries, received first aid, and were later sent home with their parents. The bus belonged to Vintage Convent School, and officials confirmed all documents related to the bus were in order during inspection, officials added. —*PTI*

—ANI

2 killed, 15 injured in MP firecracker factory blast

DEWAS/INDORE, 14 MAY

A blast at a firecracker factory in Madhya Pradesh's Dewas district killed two workers and injured 15 others. The incident occurred at the Tonk Kalan unit, with two confirmed deaths. Nine of the injured were referred to a hospital in Indore, Dewas Collector Rituraj Singh said. The fire has been controlled, and authorities seized explosives stored at another location. The factory, licensed to Anil Malviya, had started operations just 15 days ago. A detailed investigation into the blast is underway, with residents describing a massive explosion and scattered human body parts at the scene. —*PTI*

Elderly couple, grandkids killed in property row

JANJGIR, 14 MAY

An An elderly couple and their two grandchildren were allegedly murdered by two close relatives to grab family property in Chhattisgarh's Janjgir-Champa district, police said on Thursday. The couple's son, who had earlier spent 15 years in jail for killing his brother, and his son have been taken into custody in connection with the murders, an official said. The bodies were found inside their under-construction house in Bhanvtara village in the Shivrinarayan police station area after labourers reached the site for work in the morning, a police official said. The deceased are Medani Prasad Kashyap, 70, his wife Kanti Bai, 65, their grandchildren Pitambar Kashyap, 17, and Mogra, 25. The deceased couple's son, Sonsai, and his son Dakeshwar have been taken into custody. Prasad had three sons, including Sonsai. Police said Sonsai had murdered one of his brothers and had served a 15-year jail term in the case. —*PTI*

Bride fails to recognise groom in UP, sparks clash

HARDOI, 14 MAY

A clash erupted during a wedding after the bride failed to recognise the groom, claiming that he was not the man she had spoken to online. The wedding, arranged via Instagram, took place on 12 May. The bride, a lawyer, alleged the groom, Devendra Singh Parimar, 23, was not the person she knew, who had identified himself as Rahul. After seeing him, she objected, and members of her family assaulted Devendra Singh Parimar and the guests, leaving him injured and hospitalised. Nine people have been detained for questioning, the police said. —*PTI*

111 killed as gusty winds, heavy rains batter UP

72 injured, 170 cattle killed and 227 houses damaged

LUCKNOW, 14 MAY

At least 111 people were killed after a strong storm and heavy rain pounded Uttar Pradesh, uprooting trees and damaging houses, the Relief Commissioner's office said.

As the weather changed suddenly on Wednesday evening, many took shelter under trees and flyovers. Clouds of dust enveloped large parts of the state, reducing visibility and ripping hoardings and tin sheds.

High velocity winds also uprooted trees and electric poles, many of which blocked roads, crushed vehicles and damaged houses.

Rescue efforts were launched soon after. Some dug through the debris with bare hands to rescue those trapped as others rushed the injured, including children, to hospitals.

In a statement, the Relief Commissioner's office said, "Due to bad weather on May 13, including storms, rain, hailstorm and lightning, reports of 111 deaths were received from 26 districts. 72 persons were injured, 170 livestock losses and damage to 227 houses have been reported in the state."

It said the chief minister has directed all divisional commissioners and district magistrates to verify the incidents and ensure assistance is distributed to affected families within 24 hours.

The Relief Commissioner's office said it is continuously monitoring the situation in coordination with district officials and funds are being made available to districts.

Various videos showing the damage caused by the violent storm were shared on social media, but one from Bamiyana village in Bareilly stood out.

The injured who were admitted in a hospital after a strong storm and heavy rain damaged a pontoon bridge at the Rampur Ganga Ghat in Bhadohi in Uttar Pradesh —*PTI*

The video shows a man being flung nearly 50 ft in the air along with a tin roof by wind and thrown into a field. The man had held onto a tin shed to protect himself during the storm.

The Prayagraj district administration said seven deaths were reported in the Handia area, four in Phulpur, three in Soraon, two in Meja and one in Sadar due to the storm and rain. In Bhadohi, 16 people died in storm-related incidents. — *PTI*

India will ensure zero casualty during heatwaves: Shah

GHAZIABAD, 14 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday that his ministry has prepared a plan to ensure that no lives are lost in the country due to heat waves in the next few years. He said the Modi government is "proactive" rather than "reactive" towards disasters.He was speaking after presenting the President's Colour to the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at the campus of the 8th battalion here.

The flag is awarded to a military or police unit for rendering exceptional service.

The honour was bestowed on the NDRF in the 20th year of its establishment after it was raised in 2006 as a Central contingency force to undertake relief and rescue missions.

The President's Colour is not just an "acknowledgement" of the NDRF alone but of all disaster response forces, the state machinery, the NCC, NSS and 'Apda Mitras' (civil defence), Shah said. — PTI

NEET PAPER LEAK

In SC, medical body seeks NTA revamp, monitoring panel

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

A medical body has urged the Supreme Court to restructure or replace the National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts NEET-UG, citing recurring paper leaks as a "direct assault" on the fundamental rights of over 22.7 lakh aspirants.

The Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA) also sought a direction to appoint a high-powered monitoring committee, constituting a retired SC judge as Chair, a cybersecurity expert and a forensic scientist to monitor.

The NTA, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the CBI have been made parties in the plea by FAIMA.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) held on 3 May by the NTA for admissions to medical education programmes was cancelled on 12 May due to a question paper leak.

The Rajasthan Police Special Operations Group found that "guess papers" circulated on WhatsApp and Telegram contained 120 questions identical to those in the 2026 NEET exam. The matter is being

probed by the CBI to identify the source of the leak.

TWO MORE HELD

The CBI has arrested two more persons in the NEET paper-leak case. Several NTA officials who had access to the printing press are now under the scanner, officials said on Thursday. Searches at 14 locations have been conducted.

The agency has arrested Dhananjay Lokhanda from Ahilyanagar and Manisha Waghmare from Pune. The CBI earlier arrested three individuals from Jaipur, Mangilal Biwal, Vikas Biwal and Dinesh Biwal, along with Yash Yadav from Gurugram and Shubham Khairnar from Nashik. — *PTI*

People block a road after life was hit by the shutdowns called by the Kuki Zo and Naga communities against the killing of three church leaders and a civilian on Wednesday at Kangpokpi, in Churachandpur in Manipur —*PTI*

Mumbai shops told to install Marathi boards

MUMBAI, 14 MAY

Mumbai Deputy Mayor Sanjay Ghadi has asked shops and other establishments, including five-star hotels and celebrity-owned outlets, to prominently display signboards in Marathi within a month and warned of a "Shiv Sena-style" response if the order was not obeyed.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with officials of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) shops and establishments department on Wednesday, Ghadi insisted that Marathi signboards in Devanagari script were mandatory as per SC directives. Strict action would be initiated against violators, the Shiv Sena corporator said.

He warned that if establishments failed to install prominently visible Marathi signboards within a month,

workers of his organisation would respond "in Shiv Sena-style" as per directions of party president Eknath Shinde, who is Maharashtra's deputy chief minister.

Mumbai has around nine lakh shops and establishments, of which 5,020 have still not complied with the rule mandating display of Marathi signboards, the deputy mayor said.

The BMC has so far taken penal action against 3,114 establishments and imposed fines of Rs 1.91 crore, he said.

He warned that officials ignoring enforcement would also face action. — *PTI*

Shutdowns derail life in Manipur

IMPHAL, 14 MAY

- All government offices recorded thin attendance and educational institutions remained closed in the heavily affected districts of Kangpokpi, Churachandpur and Chandel in Manipur. Protesters forced shops to close down

Normal life was paralysed in at least three districts of Manipur on Thursday by shutdowns called by the Kuki Zo and Naga communities against the killing of three church leaders and a civilian a day ago.

Government offices recorded thin attendance while educational institutions remained closed in the heavily affected districts of Kangpokpi, Churachandpur and Chandel.

A 48-hour shutdown in Manipur has been called from Thursday midnight by Kuki Inpi Manipur, the apex body of Kuki tribes in the state, to protest the killing of three Thadou church leaders near Kotlen in Kangpokpi district on Wednesday.

Protesters forced the closure of markets, businesses and blocked traffic along NH 2 which connects Imphal with Dimapur in Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district, an official said.

The Churachandpur district-based Zomi Students' Federation- General Headquarters called for an indefinite shutdown in the town areas of the district from 6 pm on Wednesday.

The Chandel Naga People's Organisation also imposed a shutdown in the Chandel district against the killing of a Naga in Noney district on Wednesday.

Wilson Thanga and his wife were returning home in Dolang village on a four-wheeler when they were attacked by militants. While Thanga died on the spot, his wife was injured.

Meanwhile, Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam said on Thursday that "around 38 people" belonging to the Naga and Kuki groups were being held hostage in the state and that the admin is trying to free them. —*PTI*

TERROR ATTACKS

NIA files 7,500-page chargesheet in Red Fort area explosion case

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a 7,500-page chargesheet against the 10 accused in the Red Fort area car bomb explosion case, in which 11 people were killed, officials said on Thursday.

The high-intensity Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) blast that rocked the capital on 10 November 2025 had also left many injured and caused extensive damage.

All the 10 accused, including the main perpetrator, Dr Umer Un Nabi (deceased), were linked to the Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGuH), an offshoot of the Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), as per the chargesheet filed before the NIA special court at the Patiala House Courts here, a statement issued by the NIA said.

The AQIS and all its manifestations were notified as terrorist organisations by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs in June 2018.

The NIA, which unravelled a major "jihadi conspiracy" through a detailed scientific and forensic investigation, found the accused, some of whom were radicalised medical professionals, to have been inspired by AQIS/AGuH ideology to carry out the deadly attack, a statement said.

One of the suspects in the Delhi blast case being taken to court —*ANI*

- The NIA, which exposed a major "jihadi conspiracy" through a detailed probe, found the accused, some of whom were radicalised medical professionals, were inspired by AQIS/AGuH ideology to carry out attacks

Charges against the Pulwama-based Dr Nabi, an ex-assistant professor of medicine at Al-Falah University in Faridabad (Haryana), have been proposed to be abated.

Apart from Dr Nabi, others named in the chargesheet are Aamir Rashid Mir, Jasir Bilal Wani, Dr Muzamil Shakeel, Dr Adeel Ahmed Rather, Dr Shaheen Saeed, Mufti Irfan Ahmad Wagay, Soyab, Dr Bilal Naseer Malla and Yasir Ahmad Dar. — *PTI*

HC recalls order on 'Wire' Editor's plea for OCI tag

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The Delhi High Court revoked its earlier order that had set aside the Centre's decision to refuse 'The Wire' founding editor Siddharth Varadarajan's plea for conversion of his Person of Indian Origin (PIO) status to Overseas Citizen of India (OCI). The court stated he is guilty of suppressing facts. Justice Purushaindra Kaurav recalled on Thursday his 13 May order permitting the US citizen to travel to Estonia from 14 to 19 May and to apply for a "return visa."

The judge said the journalist had failed to disclose a 2020 Allahabad HC order granting him anticipatory bail in a criminal case, which included conditions like surrendering his passport and restrictions on travel without court permission.

Justice Kaurav said, "The court thinks that the petitioner is guilty of suppressing facts." He directed the restoration of the writ petition and asked Vardarajan to file an affidavit within seven days. —*PTI*

NATIONAL SONG

Singing of Vande Mataram made must in all West Bengal schools

KOLKATA, 14 MAY

The West Bengal government has directed all state-run and aided schools to mandatorily include the singing of Vande Mataram during morning assemblies immediately, says an official communication issued by the School Education department.

The directive states that all students must participate in singing the national song at the start of the school day. Heads of institutions have been told to ensure strict compliance.

"From next Monday, Vande Mataram will be introduced as the prayer song in all schools. I will go to Nabanna today and inform them," Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari told reporters at the Assembly.

"The singing of Vande Mataram during the assembly before the start of classes should be made mandatory so that Vande Mataram is sung by all students," the Director of Education specified in a communication to state-run and state-aided school heads on 13 May.

The move comes shortly after the Centre took steps to strengthen provisions regarding respect for national symbols, including a proposed amendment to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, making preventing the singing of the Vande Mataram a punishable offence.

School authorities have also been asked to document the proceedings, including video recordings, as proof of implementation, he said.

Earlier, schools in the state sang only the national anthem, Jana Gana Mana, composed by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. — *PTI*

Leopard may have killed cheetah cubs in Kuno

SHEOPUR, 14 MAY

Four-month-old cheetah cubs found dead near Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district are suspected to have been killed by a leopard, an official said. The cubs, born to cheetah KGP12 on 11 April, were discovered on Tuesday outside the protected forest, with their bodies partially eaten.

Cheetah Project director Sharma told PTI, "A leopard most likely killed them. I cannot say with 100 per cent certainty until the post-mortem report is out. But based on the pattern of the attack and the feeding, it was most probably a leopard." The mother cheetah remains safe and healthy.

The park's leopard population exceeds 150, in an area of 1,777 sq.km. —*PTI*

Odisha govt blames panic buys for fuel shortage

BHUBANESWAR, 14 MAY

Long queues of vehicles were observed at fuel outlets across Odisha on Thursday, some displaying "no stock" signs. The state government asserted there was no actual fuel shortage, attributing the situation to panic buying by some residents. Chief Secretary Anu Garg told reporters, "We are aware of the matter. The state government will soon take a decision in this regard."

Reports of long queues came from Bhubaneswar, Jeypore, Kalahandi, Kendrapada, and other locations. While petrol pumps installed barricades to manage crowds, some outlets limited fuel sales to Rs 200 for two-wheelers and Rs 2,000 for four-wheelers.

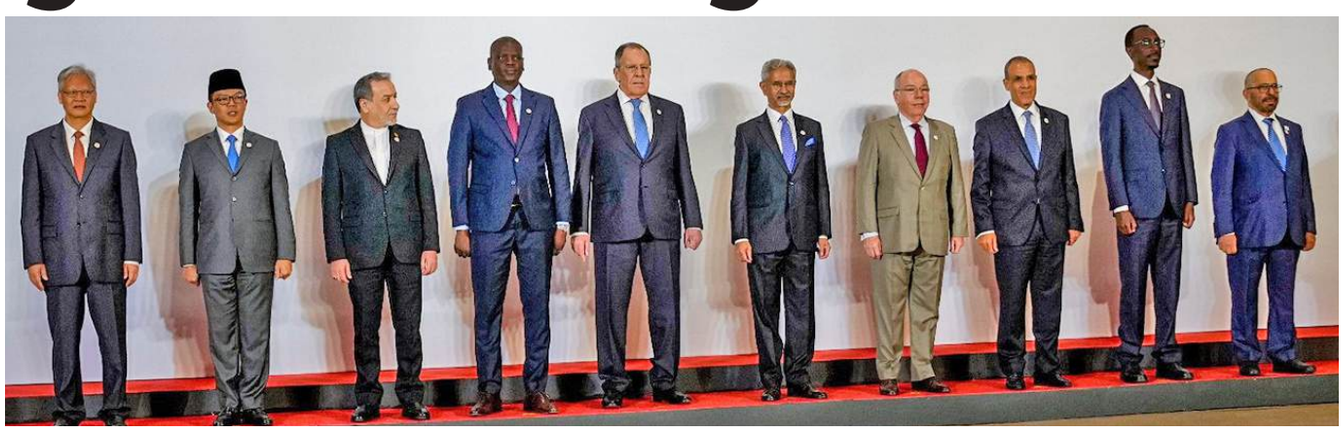
Sanjay Lath, General Secretary of the Utkal Petroleum Dealers Association, said this was a

temporary phase caused by panic buying after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for austerity. He explained, "The people have misinterpreted the PM's message on austerity.

There is adequate stock of petrol and diesel in Odisha. There is no shortage here, and people should not believe rumours." Lath added that out of 3,000 fuel outlets, around 100 had run dry over the past 2-3 days due to increased sales.

Most outlets in Bhubaneswar were expected to restock by evening, he said. —*PTI*

BRICS seeks common ground amid global crisis



From right: UAE MoS Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar, Ethiopia FM Gedion Timothewos, Egypt FM Badr Abdelatty, Brazil FM Mauro Vieira, India EAM S Jaishankar, Russia FM Sergey Lavrov, South Africa FM Ronald Lamola, Iran FM Abbas Araghchi, Indonesia FM Sugiono and China's Ambassador Xu Feihong pose for a family photo at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi —*PTI*

As foreign ministers from the BRICS nations gathered in New Delhi, the expanding bloc found itself confronting the sharpest test yet of its ambitions to emerge as a major Global South counterweight to Western-led institutions.

The two-day meeting in India, which holds the BRICS presidency, comes at a moment of mounting geopolitical instability. The Iran war has disrupted global energy supplies, driven up oil prices and intensified economic uncertainty worldwide. At the same time, global attention has also turned to the high-stakes meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing.

The BRICS meeting brought together diplomats from founding members Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, alongside newer entrants including Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia, which formally joined the grouping in 2025. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov attended the talks, while China was represented by Ambassador Xu Feihong as Foreign Minister Wang Yi remained in Beijing for Trump's visit.

India's 2026 BRICS presidency expects the bloc to stabilise volatile global supply chains and protect developing economies amid the ongoing energy crisis. The aim is to protect nations from inflation and secure reliable access to fossil fuels and fertilisers.

INDIA CALLS FOR OPEN HORMUZ

Opening the meeting, External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar called for "safe, unimpeded maritime flows" through international waters, including the Strait of Hormuz.

"We meet at a time of considerable flux in international relations," Jaishankar said, adding that developing countries increasingly expected BRICS to play a "constructive and stabilising role".

Without naming any country directly, he argued that "dialogue and diplomacy" remained the only sustainable path towards conflict resolution. India, he said, was prepared to contribute constructively to de-escalation efforts and support initiatives aimed at restoring regional stability. "Peace cannot be piecemeal," Jaishankar said, adding that it was essential to uphold international law, protect civilians and avoid attacks on public infrastructure.

FAULTLINES WITHIN THE ALLIANCE

Yet, the gathering also highlighted the contradictions at the heart of the bloc.

Originally formed in 2006 as BRIC — bringing together Brazil, Russia, India and China — the grouping was envisioned as a coalition of major emerging economies capable of challenging Western dominance in global governance. South Africa joined in 2010, transforming it into BRICS.

Over time, BRICS has sought to amplify the demands of the Global South and push for reforms in institutions long dominated by the United States and its Western allies, including the IMF and World Bank. The bloc has gained support across developing countries frustrated by what they see as unequal global financial structures and declining effectiveness within the post-1945 liberal international order.

However, despite its growing membership and ambitions, BRICS remains an informal and deeply divided grouping.

India and China continue to compete for strategic influence across Asia. Russia's war in Ukraine exposed divisions among members over relations with the West. The bloc's rapid expansion has added further complexity, bringing together countries with competing regional priorities and divergent foreign policy goals.

Nowhere are those tensions more visible than in the West Asia war.

Iran and the UAE, both BRICS members, stand on opposite sides of several regional disputes. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi acknowledged this week that internal disagreements had prevented BRICS from adopting a unified position on the conflict.

"One member country is insisting on condemning Iran," he said, warning that visible divisions risked damaging BRICS' credibility at a time when the grouping was expected to project unity.

The war itself has had far-reaching global consequences. More than two months after the US and Israel launched military operations against Iran, the conflict remains locked in a fragile ceasefire. Civilian casualties have mounted in Iran and Lebanon, while Israeli cities have also suffered casualties from Iranian missile attacks.

ENERGY CRISIS DEEPENS ANXIETY

The economic fallout has spread far beyond the region.

The disruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies normally pass, has pushed energy prices sharply higher. Iran has restricted shipping access and required vessels from selected countries to negotiate transit through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, while a US naval blockade on Iranian ports has further disrupted trade flows.

The impact has been global. Rising LPG prices on India's black market have reportedly forced migrant workers to leave cities, while fears of a US recession have intensified. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was forced to announce "austerity measures", including Covid-like work from home measures, to save fuel in the country. Fuel prices in the Philippines have more than doubled. Food prices have surged across Gulf countries heavily dependent on imports. Fertiliser supplies transiting through Hormuz remain disrupted, threatening global agricultural production.

BRICS EXPANSION EXPOSES DIVIDE

Against this backdrop, expectations grew that BRICS — particularly after Iran joined the expanded BRICS+ grouping — would play a meaningful diplomatic role. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Araghchi publicly called on India to help mediate.

Instead, the bloc has largely remained silent.

That silence has revived longstanding questions about BRICS' ability to function as a coherent geopolitical force rather than simply a loose political forum.

The pattern is familiar. BRICS offered only muted responses to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, despite issuing strong collective criticism of NATO intervention in Libya during the Arab Spring. At the 2025 BRICS summit in Brazil, conflicts across the globe overshadowed discussions centred largely on environmental issues ahead of COP30.

Still, BRICS' ambiguity has sometimes allowed major members to protect their own strategic interests. India secured safe passage for some vessels through direct negotiations with Iran. China and Russia jointly blocked a Bahraini-backed resolution at the United Nations Security Council that would have authorised military force in Hormuz, helping cool tensions before Trump eventually announced a ceasefire framework.

GROWING AMBITIONS, LIMITED CONSENSUS

Critics argue that BRICS increasingly behaves less like a structured multilateral organisation and more like an informal "diplomatic club" similar to the G7. Unlike institutions such as the United Nations, ASEAN or the European Union, BRICS lacks formal mechanisms capable of enforcing collective decisions. The group has struggled to release united statements regarding the West Asia war, a notable shift from 2025 when they condemned strikes on Iran.

Yet dissatisfaction with BRICS may also reflect deeper frustrations with the global system itself. Amid divergent views on the ongoing wars, India is navigating a tough path to protect its own economic interests.

Among India's objectives are leveraging the bloc to share successful DPI models (such as UPI) and fostering cooperation in AI, fintech, and digital health. New Delhi is pressing the New Development Bank to expand local-currency lending to fund sustainable energy infrastructure. India is also looking at strengthening its supply chain of critical minerals, semiconductors, and pharmaceuticals. —*Salar News*

SALAR سالار

From Oppn firebrand to CM: The rise of Satheesan

VD Satheesan is also seen as one of the architects of the Congress party's generational shift in Keralam politics —*PTI*

VD Satheesan, who for more than a decade cultivated an image as one of Keralam's most aggressive Opposition voices while maintaining a calm and approachable public persona, has now risen to the state's top political office as Chief Minister.

The 61-year-old lawyer-turned-politician from Paravur near Kochi was chosen by the Congress high command after his widely noted performance as Leader of the Opposition in the Keralam Assembly. During his tenure, Satheesan relentlessly targeted the ruling Left government on corruption allegations, law-and-order concerns and the state's worsening financial condition, often taking the political battle directly to former Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Though he had never previously served as a minister, Satheesan earned a reputation within the Congress as a disciplined, media-savvy and detail-oriented leader. Supporters credit him with revitalising the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) after its defeat in the 2021 Assembly election, while critics within the faction-ridden party argue that his centralised style occasionally alienated senior leaders.

Satheesan is also seen as one of the architects of the Congress party's generational shift in Keralam politics. He promoted younger faces within the organisation and attempted to project a cleaner, more modern image for the Opposition alliance at a time when the Congress was struggling to regain momentum in the state.

His decisive emergence as the face of the UDF became unmistakable during the 2026 Assembly election campaign. In a dramatic pre-election pledge, Satheesan declared that he would take "rashtreeya vanavas", political exile, if the UDF failed to secure a decisive mandate. He confidently predicted that the alliance would cross 100 seats, a forecast that ultimately proved correct.

The strong electoral performance significantly strengthened his position within the Congress and ended speculation over rival contenders for the chief minister's post, including senior Congress leader KC Venugopal. As victory celebrations unfolded, thousands of supporters took to the streets across Keralam, underlining Satheesan's rise as one of the party's most popular mass leaders since the era of K Karunakaran, AK Antony and Oommen Chandy.

Within the Congress, many now trace the roots of the party's revival to the difficult months following the 2021 Assembly election defeat, when Rahul Gandhi backed Satheesan as Leader of the Opposition. At the time, the appointment was considered risky and uncertain by sections of the party. In retrospect, however, many Congress workers view it as the turning point that revived the organisation and restored voter confidence.

Satheesan's political journey began far from the Assembly floor. Born in Nettoor in Ernakulam district, he first entered politics through student activism. He was active in student politics at Sacred Heart College, Thevara and later at Mahatma Gandhi University, where he held key leadership positions. His work in the National Students' Union of India further cemented his place within the Congress structure.

A practising lawyer at the Keralam High Court, Satheesan first contested elections from the Paravur constituency in the mid-1990s. Although he lost his maiden election, he recovered quickly and won the seat in his next attempt. Since then, he has built a formidable political base in the constituency, securing repeated victories in 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021. In the 2021 Assembly election, he won by a margin of 21,301 votes.

Within the Congress organisation, Satheesan held several important posts, including AICC secretary and KPCC vice-president. He gained prominence through sharp interventions in the Assembly, notably during exchanges with former Finance Minister T M Thomas Isaac over interstate lottery policies, debates that enhanced his image as a politician focused on policy and governance rather than rhetoric alone.

He also built a reputation for speaking on environmental issues. During the Congress-led UDF government years, Satheesan was associated with a group informally known as the "Green MLAs", which supported the recommendations of the Madhav Gadgil Committee on protecting the Western Ghats while also expressing concerns over implementation challenges.

Known for his careful preparation and data-driven arguments, Satheesan adopted a far more aggressive political style after becoming Leader of the Opposition in 2021. Under his leadership, the UDF improved its performance in by-elections, local body polls and Lok Sabha elections in Keralam. Supporters attribute the turnaround to his emphasis on coalition teamwork, organisational rebuilding and sustained focus on local issues. His rise was not without resistance. Satheesan faced criticism from influential caste leaders, including Vellappally Natesan, representing the influential Ezhava community, and G Sukumaran Nair, head of the Nair Service Society and a leader from Satheesan's own community background.

Now, after years as one of Keralam's most vocal Opposition figures, Satheesan assumes office as Chief Minister carrying both the expectations of a rejuvenated Congress and the challenge of translating his combative Opposition politics into governance. —*PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

US-Israel war against Iran exposes limits of petrodollar system

This formed the petrodollar system, rooted in a 1974 US-Saudi pact: oil priced in dollars flowed money to America, while Gulf nations gained political and military support -*PTI*

For the first time since the Second World War, excluding the Covid-19 pandemic, US public debt has surpassed the nation's entire economy's GDP. As of late March, debt held by the public reached $31.27 trillion, edging ahead of GDP at $31.22 trillion.

This milestone is often viewed as a long-term fiscal challenge, but its economic costs are now immediate. The sharpest threat stems from the risk that major foreign holders of US assets begin withdrawing capital from American markets.

Gulf states, whose faith in US fiscal and military protection has been eroded by US-Israel attacks on Iran, hold roughly $2 trillion in US assets via their sovereign wealth funds. Officials across the Gulf are already rethinking their exposures. In March, one Gulf official revealed that three of the four largest economies in the Gulf Cooperation Council were reviewing sovereign wealth fund positions to mitigate the fallout from the Iran war.

WHY THE US CANNOT SIMPLY BLOCK A SELL-OFF

The US has few tools to halt foreign investors' sales. The freedom to enter and exit what the Federal Reserve calls "the deepest and most liquid fixed-income market in the world" is precisely what draws investors to US assets. Yet this openness creates a profound vulnerability.

The US economy leans heavily on overstretched asset valuations—sky-high prices for stocks, bonds, and real estate that outstrip underlying fundamentals. If holders lose confidence and these bloated markets correct, a cascade ensues, with prices plunging sharply, much like the 2008 financial crisis. The real economy bears the brunt.

The current scenario poses parallel dangers. Should Gulf states offload US assets amid regional turmoil, declining prices would erode collateral values system-wide. Leveraged institutions, facing weakened balance sheets, would slash borrowing and dump assets, driving prices lower still. This spiral would amplify financial stress globally.

SWAP LINES AS A STOPGAP

Amid mounting pressures, central bank swap lines have re-emerged as a key instrument. These pacts allow foreign central banks to access US dollars without liquidating American holdings, averting forced sales that depress prices and contagion.

The Fed deployed swap lines during the 2008 crisis to furnish dollar liquidity to banks and governments in sudden need. Recently, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent noted that several Gulf and Asian allies had sought such arrangements to forestall a "disorderly" asset sell-off.

But whence comes this dollar liquidity? For decades, the dollar's global dominance let the US spend beyond its means, as trading partners earned dollars and recycled them into US markets. Gulf states were pivotal, channelling oil revenues into US bonds, stocks, real estate, and weapons.

This formed the petrodollar system, rooted in a 1974 US-Saudi pact: oil priced in dollars flowed money to America, while Gulf nations gained political and military support. It enabled the Fed to expand the money supply via quantitative easing domestically and swap lines abroad.

Such measures can steady markets short-term, but they entrench dependence on endless interventions, postponing, not curing, core strains.

A FRACTURING ARRANGEMENT

The petrodollar thrives only if Gulf states repatriate funds to US markets. Swap lines invert this: dollars now flow outward to the Gulf.

Iran's pressure on Gulf states, via strikes on economic targets and threats to the Strait of Hormuz, breeds oil market volatility, budget squeezes, and instability. Gulf sovereign wealth funds are pivoting to liquidity and agility.

The United Arab Emirates' departure from OPEC on 1 May underscores the energy-financial bargain's breakdown. Gulf states crave greater sway over production, revenues, and liquidity than OPEC permits. The exit likely bows to US bids to curb oil prices short-term.

This ploy is unsustainable. Cheap oil aids US importers now, but Gulf budgets, funds, and diversification efforts hinge on robust revenues.

Gulf states also hint at broadening alternative currencies, like China's yuan, for oil trades if dollar liquidity falters amid unrest. This would hasten emerging economies' drift from dollar reliance.

Swap lines to the Gulf might temper this, but likely cannot halt the diversification momentum.

A SYSTEM UNDER PRESSURE

The global financial architecture was fragmenting and diluting dollar primacy well before the Iran war. President Donald Trump's Iran escalations have hastened the shift, undermining the political-military pillars of the petrodollar era. Policymakers now lean on swap lines, monetary expansion, and crisis coordination as routine stabilisers for dollar flows and ally confidence, tools once confined to emergencies. This erodes US asset credibility.

At root lies a financialised global economy: asset bubbles, geopolitical clashes, and a US-centric order buckling under strain. —*PTI*

QUOTE of THE DAY

Because of Secret Service protocols, I don't travel outside of the country with the President. So on days like today, I sometimes feel like Macaulay Culkin in Home Alone. I walk into the White House, and it's very quiet, and no one's there

—JD VANCE,
US Vice President

Trump, Xi meet at the 'biggest summit ever'

US, China should be partners, not rivals: Xi

BEIJING, 14 MAY

Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump kicked off a crucial series of meetings in Beijing in a US-China summit where stability in the relationship is the main goal of the two days of discussions. Xi said that the two countries "should be partners, not rivals," calling for "cooperation" instead of "confrontation" between the two superpowers.

The White House and Chinese state media said the leaders concluded their meeting on Thursday morning after about two hours. Trump is expected to leave just after midday Friday after a final private meeting with Xi.

Xi said he told the several American corporate leaders who accompanied Trump that China's door will open wider to US business. Trump said the business leaders all respect China.

"The whole world is watching our meeting. Currently, a transformation not seen in a century is accelerating across the globe, and the international situation is fluid and turbulent. The world has come to a new crossroads," Xi said. "We both believe that China and the US relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world. We must make it work and never mess it up."

We both believe that the China-US relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world. We must make it work and never mess it up.... Achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese great nation and Making America Great Again can go hand in hand

-Xi Jinping,
Chinese President

Trump, speaking at a conference, described the talks with Xi went "great" and called the Chinese President his "friend", lauding the "biggest summit ever".

The trade ties between the two countries had spiralled out of control during Trump's tariff war.

The fentanyl issue has also remained a major source of friction between Washington and Beijing.

The US approved around 10 Chinese companies to purchase Nvidia's H200 artificial intelligence chips, but no deliveries have taken place so far. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang was among the several business leaders in Trump's delegation. —*Agencies*

Chinese President Xi Jinping shakes hands with US President Donald Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, on Thursday —*PTI*

Both agree Hormuz should be open for all

BEIJING, 14 MAY

Both the US and China agreed that the Strait of Hormuz should be open for all and that the Iran should never have a nuclear weapon, according to a White House statement after the Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping met.

The statement said that Xi opposed "the militarisation of the Strait and any effort to charge a toll for its use" and that "the two sides agreed that the Strait of Hormuz must remain open to support the free flow of energy."

The statement claimed that China had agreed to purchase more American oil. However, there has been no official confirmation from Beijing.

The statement is crucial, as China has deep strategic and economic ties with Iran. It accounts for nearly 80 per cent of Tehran's oil exports and has even reportedly provided some form of reconnaissance or military aid to Iran during the US-Israeli war. However, it has refrained from actively engaging in the war and has instead called for a cessation of hostilities.

Thank you, President Xi, for this beautiful welcome. Tonight, it is my honour to extend an invitation to you (and) Madam Peng, to visit us at the White House this 24 September ... The enduring ties between the American and Chinese people... (is) very special

-Donald Trump,
US President

Notably, Iran has reportedly been charging its 'transit fee' in Chinese yuan, in what can be seen as a threat to the petrodollar.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that Trump intended to ask Xi to play a "more active role" in resolving the Iran war crisis.

Rubio said the war was a "huge source of instability" and "threatens to destabilise Asia more than any other part of the world because it's heavily reliant on the Straits for energy".

"It's in (China's) interest to resolve this. We hope to convince them to play a more active role in getting Iran to walk away from what they're doing now," he said.

It is unclear how much Trump and Xi discussed this, but US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent later claimed that "I think they're going to do what they can". —*Agencies*

Tibet issue should be resolved: Govt in-exile

DHARAMSHALA, 14 MAY

The Tibetan government-in-exile has stated that the Tibet issue must be addressed during the Trump-Xi meeting. Spokesperson Tenzin Lekshay said that global leaders should engage responsibly for humanity's future, raising Tibet concerns. He emphasised the US' Tibet policies encouraging dialogue with China but noted the Tibet issue remains unresolved. Lekshay highlighted the importance of the US raising Tibet directly with Beijing, as Chinese authorities continue to suppress Tibetan identity and occupy Tibet. —*ANI*

—*PTI*

Senate confirms Warsh as Federal Reserve Chairman

WASHINGTON, 14 MAY

The Senate confirmed Kevin Warsh as the new Chair of the Federal Reserve amid economic turbulence. The largely party-line vote followed doubts over his nomination, which was delayed after an investigation into Fed Chair Jerome Powell was dropped. Senate Majority Leader John Thune urged colleagues to support Warsh, emphasising the importance of understanding both macro and micro-economics. Warsh, 56, will lead the Fed at a time of rising inflation, with rates above 2 per cent for five years. Powell plans to stay on the Board beyond his term. The Fed faces inflationary pressures, with gas prices pushing inflation to 3.8 per cent in April. —*PTI*

Pakistan test fires Fatah-4 cruise missile

ISLAMABAD, 14 MAY

Pakistan on Thursday successfully test-fired indigenously developed Fatah-4 ground-launched cruise missile capable of engaging long-range targets with high precision, according to a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the military. The missile is equipped with advanced avionics and state-of-the-art navigational aids, it stated. The missile was test-fired to enhance operational efficiency and validate technical parameters of various sub-systems incorporated for improved accuracy and enhanced survivability. —*PTI*

61 killed in Sudan ethnic violence: Doctor group

CAIRO, 14 MAY

At least 61 people have been killed in the Sudanese city of Kauda, including 9 children and 5 women, as a result of ethnically based targeting carried out by forces of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) against the Otoro tribe, the Sudan Doctor's Network stated on Wednesday, citing testimonies from survivors. The SPLM-N is one of the many groups affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group that has been locked in a civil war with the government's Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). "The region also witnessed a massive wave of displacement," the Network added. —*AGENCIES*

US and China could come into conflict over Taiwan: Xi

Chinese President Xi Jinping warned his US counterpart Donald Trump on Thursday that mishandling the Taiwan issue could trigger "clashes and even conflicts" between the two countries.

Xi stressed that the Taiwan question remained the most important issue in China-US relations. If the issue handled properly, the bilateral relationship "will enjoy overall stability", Xi said, urging caution.

Xi said maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait was central to stable ties between Beijing and Washington, warning that support for "Taiwan independence" was incompatible with cross-Strait peace.

In response to Xi's comments, Taiwan said: "China is currently the only risk to regional peace and stability."

China regards the self-ruled Taiwan as its own that must eventually be reunified with the mainland.

Taiwan was historically part of China, but split during the 1949 Chinese Civil War, when the Republic of China (ROC) government under Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taipei after losing to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao Zedong.

The US did not recognise the CCP government of China, and only regocnised the Taiwan government. However, after former president Richard Nixon's visit to China, the US established diplomatic relations with Beijing and recognised the communist government. The US still maintained ties with Taiwan and continued supplying arms to the island while formally acknowledging Beijing's position that Taiwan is part of China under Beijing's "one China" policy, without explicitly endorsing it.

Currently, the central problem relates to massive $14 billion arms sales that the Trump administration has approved to Taipei. —*Agencies*

Ship seized near UAE, heads to Iran

Israeli airstrikes destroy a residential building on the Kfar Rumman-Al-Madinah highway in Lebanon —*NNA*

DUBAI, 14 MAY

A ship anchored off the east coast of the United Arab Emirates has been seized and was heading toward Iranian waters, the British military said Thursday.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) centre said it received reports that the vessel was taken by unauthorised personnel while anchored 38 nautical miles (70 kms) northeast of the UAE port of Fujairah, near the Strait of Hormuz.

The UKMTO did not name the ship and said it is investigating. There were no immediate claims of responsibility for the seizure. Fujairah is an important oil export terminal and the UAE's main port outside of the Persian Gulf. It has been repeatedly attacked during the war with Iran.

ISRAEL POUNDS LEBANON

Israel continued to bomb Lebanon as officials from both countries were expected to meet on later on Thursday to discuss renewing a fragile ceasefire that is set to expire. Hezbollah's attacks on Israel, meanwhile, also injured three Israelis.

At least two people were killed in Lebanon, state-run National News Agency reported. It stated that there was "massive displacement" in several Lebanese towns, with Israel issuing evacuation orders to some. —*Agencies*

UAE denies Netanyahu secretly visited during war

JERUSALEM, 14 MAY

The United Arab Emirates denied Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's statement that he secretly visited the country during the Israeli-US war with Iran.

Netanyahu's office said on Wednesday that met with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in a gathering that "resulted in a historic breakthrough in relations between Israel and the UAE".

However, UAE's official WAM said that the country's relations with Israel "are public and conducted within the framework of the well-known and officially declared Abraham Accords, and are not based on non-transparent or unofficial arrangements".

It also denied any Israeli military delegation was received in the UAE.

However, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Thursday said on X that Netanyahu's message "confirmed" what Tehran's security services had been saying and warned that those colluding with Israel will be held to account. —*Agencies*

The massive Russian drone barrage brought down a residential building in Kyiv on Thursday —*UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICES*

Russia pounds Kyiv with 652 drones, kills 5

KYIV, 14 MAY

A massive Russian drone and missile attack early on Thursday morning killed at least five people and injured 33 others in Ukraine's capital Kyiv, authorities said. At least 20 people were reported missing as the strikes brought down several apartments.

Ukraine's Air Force said it shot down or jammed 693 targets overnight, including 41 missiles and 652 drones of various types across the country. However, 15 missiles and 23 drones scored direct hits across 24 locations. Debris from downed drones fell across an additional 18 locations.

Kyiv was the primary target of the attack, which came shortly after Russia launched an equally massive, but longer, attack on Wednesday, killing six.

"These are definitely not the actions of those who believe the war is coming to an end," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, noting the attacks were timed to the US-China meeting.

The damage to civilian infrastructure was immense, with at least 18 apartments destroyed in Kyiv, while the cities of Kremenchuk, Bila Tserkva, Kharkiv, Sumy and Odesa were also hit. In one such attack, a multistory residential building in Kyiv partially collapsed, burying people under the rubble, at least 27 of whom were rescued. —*PTI*

Cuba has run out of diesel, oil amid US embargo

HAVANA, 14 MAY

Cuba has run out of oil and diesel, Energy Minister Vicente de la O Levy told state media on Wednesday as massive protests broke out in the capital Havana amid frequent blackouts and power cuts.

Under the US blockade of Cuba's fuel imports, parts of Havana have been plunged into 20 to 22-hour blackout periods, he said, adding that the island nation's energy imports are "critical".

Hospitals have been unable to function normally, while schools and government offices have been shut. Tourism, an economic engine, has also been hurt.Neither Mexico nor Venezuela, once top suppliers of oil to Cuba, have sent fuel to the island since Trump's January 2026 order threatening to slap tariffs on countries shipping fuel to Cuba.

"Cuba is open to anyone that wants to sell us fuel," O Levy said. "We have no reserves." —*Agencies*

Hantavirus doc leaves isolation unit

NEBRASKA, 14 MAY

An American oncologist involved in caring for passengers during a hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship has been cleared to leave a biocontainment unit in Nebraska. Dr. Stephen Kornfeld from Bend, Oregon, was among over 120 evacuated passengers and crew flown for quarantine. He was the only American placed in isolation after his nasal swab gave inconclusive results.

On Wednesday, the hospital announced Kornfeld will join the other 15 Americans monitored at the National Quarantine Unit rather than the biocontainment facility. Kornfeld told CNN's "Erin Burnett OutFront" he feels "wonderful, 100 per cent". He experienced flu-like symptoms but now reports no symptoms.

The WHO reported 11 hantavirus cases linked to the cruise, including three deaths, with eight confirmed by lab tests. While hantavirus typically spreads from rodents, the Andes virus detected on the Hondius may, in rare cases, transmit between people.

Kornfeld described his quarantine room as a hospital room: "It's a little weird being in here by myself." —*PTI*

Latvian PM resigns over Ukraine drones

Latvian Center-Right Prime Minister Evika Silina announced her resignation on Thursday after the left-wing Progressives Party, part of the governing coalition, said it was withdrawing its support for the government, leaving Silina without a majority. This comes over the government's handling of multiple incidents involving stray Ukrainian drones crossing into Latvian territory.

Meanwhile, Hungary's new government summoned the Russian ambassador over a drone attack near its Ukraine border.

UK TO REPLACE PM AGAIN?

Labour leaders likely to launch coup against Starmer

LONDON, 14 MAY

Efforts to unseat British Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** are likely to break out into open rebellion on Thursday, with one potential rival expected to announce his bid for the job and another clearing the way for her to enter any future leadership contest.

Allies of Health Secretary **Wes Streeting** say he will make an announcement later in the day after garnering enough support from lawmakers of the governing Labour Party to challenge Starmer after the Party's drubbing in the recent local elections. Streeting, like Starmer, comes from the moderate wing of the Left-leaning Labour Party.

Meanwhile, former deputy prime minister **Angela Rayner** said that she had reached an agreement with tax authorities to clear up questions about her taxes that forced her to leave the Cabinet last September.

Rayner said that Starmer should "reflect on" his position, adding that she was ready to "play my part" in any leadership election if Streeting were to trigger a contest. Rayner is more popular with the Left-wing voters.

Starmer, however, has vowed to remain in office.

Under Labour rules, a challenger needs 81 of the party's 403 members in the House of Commons. More than that have publicly called on Starmer to quit recently.—*PTI*

Wholesale price inflation highest in 3.5 years

Rate jump from 3.88% to 8.3% in April triggered spike in fuel, power & crude costs

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Wholesale price inflation shot up to 8.30 per cent in April from 3.88 per cent in March, the highest in the last 42 months. This surge was triggered by a sharp increase in the price of fuel, power and crude petroleum.

The wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation in fuel and power jumped to 24.71 per cent in April, from 1.05 per cent in March. In crude petroleum, inflation was 88.06 per cent in April as compared to 51.5 per cent in the previous month.

The sharp rise in WPI inflation reflects the impact of the West Asia crisis and the effective blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, through which most of India's crude oil is imported. "Positive rate of inflation in April 2026 is primarily due to an increase in prices of mineral oils, crude petroleum & natural gas, basic metals, other manufacturing and non-food articles, etc.," the ministry said in a statement.

Inflation in food articles was 1.98 per cent in April, compared to 1.90 per cent in March –*PTI*

- Wholesale price inflation shot up to 8.30 per cent in April from 3.88 per cent in March, the highest in the last 42 months. This surge was triggered by a sharp increase in the price of fuel, power and crude petroleum.

Inflation in food articles was 1.98 per cent in April, compared to 1.90 per cent in March. In non-food articles, inflation rose to 12.18 per cent in April, 11.5 per cent in the previous month, as per data released by the commerce and industry ministry.

In the fuel and power basket, inflation in LPG was 10.92 per cent in April, as against negative 1.54 per cent in March, while in petrol it was 32.40 per cent, against 2.50 per cent in the previous month. In high-speed diesel, inflation was 25.19 per cent in April against 3.26 per cent in March.

Despite a 50 per cent spike in global crude oil prices, the government has so far held fuel pump and household LPG rates stable to shield households from the impact of the rise in retail prices of petrol, diesel and LPG. However, prices of commercial LPG cylinders have been raised.—*PTI*

Assam exports first agarwood chips to Gulf

GUWAHATI, 14 MAY

Assam has exported its first consignment of agarwood chips worth Rs 2.35 crore to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, officials confirmed. Agarwood, also known as Oud, is a highly valuable aromatic raw material used in luxury perfumes, incense, cosmetics, and traditional products worldwide. The shipment marks a "significant milestone" in Assam's agro-forest economy, as it is the "first legally approved export of agarwood chips," according to the All Assam Agarwood Planters and Traders Association. Comprising 100 kg to Saudi Arabia and 12 kg to the UAE, the consignment was dispatched from Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport after securing all statutory clearances. The association said this achievement results from years of research, policy advocacy, and international compliance efforts.—*PTI*

Akash Ambani named Jio MD ahead of IPO

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Jio Platforms has appointed Akash Ambani as managing director for five years, ahead of its planned initial public offering (IPO), the company announced in a regulatory filing. The firm is expected to file draft papers for the IPO by late May or June. The filing, dated 7 May, states that "Akash M Ambani...appointed as managing director of the company, for a period of 5 years with effect from 9 April, 2026." Ambani has served on the board of Reliance Jio Infocomm (RJIL), Jio's telecom arm, since October 2014 and was appointed Chairman in June 2022. During his tenure, Jio surpassed 100 million subscribers within six months of launch and reported a profit of over Rs 30,000 crore with revenue of Rs 1.46 lakh crore for fiscal year 2026. —*PTI*

Roche launches India's 1st lung cancer injection

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Swiss pharma major Roche on Thursday announced its India launch for Tecentriq SC for lung cancer treatment injections. The subcutaneous (under-the-skin) immunotherapy can be administered in approximately seven minutes, compared to conventional IV (intravenous) infusions that can take hours, said Roche India Director Sivabalan Sivanesan. infusion, thus helping optimise healthcare resources. Roche Pharma India said Tecentriq SC can treat up to five patients in the time it takes to administer one intravenous infusion. It is priced at about "Rs 3.7 lakh per vial." India has an estimated 80,000 lung cancer patients diagnosed annually, most of whom are in advanced stages. Tecentriq SC is available in 85 countries, and over 10,000 patients have benefited globally, Sivanesan added. —*PTI*

WORST PERFORMER IN ASIA

Rupee settles at record low of 95.73 against USD

MUMBAI, 14 MAY

The rupee weakened further to a record low of 95.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, amid a strong dollar. Forex traders said the rupee is expected to trade with a negative bias. The West Asia crisis and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz have disrupted crude petroleum imports, making fuel imports costlier.

Registering a loss of over 6 per cent, the rupee is now the worst-performing currency in Asia this year. Investor sentiment has been dampened by high oil prices, a strong dollar, and geopolitical tensions in West Asia, sparking fresh inflation fears.

In a volatile trade, the USD/INR pair witnessed an intraday high of 95.61 and an all-time intraday low of 95.96 against the greenback before settling at 95.73 (provisional), down 7 paise from its previous close. The rupee on Wednesday slipped to an all-time low of 95.80 against the US dollar, and settled at 95.66 against the greenback.

- The rupee weakened further to a record low of 95.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, amid a strong dollar. Forex traders said the rupee is expected to trade with a negative bias. The West Asia crisis and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz have disrupted crude petroleum imports

INR TO KEEP FALLING: ICICI

The Indian rupee could face further depreciation if the West Asia conflict continues for a prolonged period, with higher crude oil prices likely to keep pressure on India's economy and external balances, according to an ICICI Bank research report.

The report said that while the temporary truce between Iran and the US has brought some stability to currency markets, uncertainty over a final resolution remains high.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias amid inflation concerns and a strong dollar. Rising inflation in the US dimmed expectations of a rate cut by the Fed," said Anuj Choudhary, Research analyst at Mirae Asset ShareKhan. —*Agencies*

OpenAI's new AI deployment company drags IT stocks

MUMBAI, 14 MAY

IT shares extended their sell-off for a fourth straight session on Thursday, dragging the Nifty IT index down nearly 3 per cent even as benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed sharply higher amid value buying and positive global cues.

The sharp decline in technology stocks followed concerns over AI-led disruption after OpenAI announced the launch of the OpenAI Deployment Company, a new venture aimed at helping organisations build and deploy AI systems for everyday operations. The company has reportedly secured more than USD 4 billion from a consortium of 19 global firms and is valued between USD 10 billion and USD 14 billion.

Analysts said the move heightened fears that OpenAI's shift from a software provider to a hands-on enterprise technology and consulting player could directly challenge labour-intensive IT outsourcing firms. The Nifty IT index has now fallen nearly 8 per cent over the past four sessions and hit its lowest level since May 2023 earlier this week.

All IT stocks ended in the red on Thursday. Persistent Systems led the losses, falling more than 5 per cent, while HCL Technologies and Tech Mahindra dropped up to 5 per cent. Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and Coforge declined between 1 and 3 per cent. Despite the IT rout, broader markets ended higher. The BSE Sensex jumped 789.74 points, or 1.06 per cent, to close at 75,398.72, while the NSE Nifty gained 277 points to settle at 23,689.60.Bharti Airtel emerged as the biggest gainer, rising over 5 per cent after annual revenue crossed Rs 2 lakh crore for the first time. Pharma, banking and metal shares also supported gains amid optimism surrounding the Trump-Xi meeting and hopes of stronger economic cooperation between the US and China. —*Salar News*

Gold price rises to ₹1.66 lakh/10g

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Gold prices increased by Rs 650 to Rs 1.66 lakh per 10 grams in on Thursday, driven by the rupee's fall to a record low amid geopolitical tensions.

Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst at HDFC Securities, explained that however, the upside remained limited as higher prices weighed on physical demand and kept overall buying interest subdued."

The rupee weakened further, reaching a provisional low of 95.73 against the US dollar, amid a strong dollar and inflation concerns due to high energy prices.

Following a recent hike in import duty, the sharp rise in domestic prices led to investor selling and delayed new purchases, further weakening physical demand.

Gandhi noted that "gold discounts in India widened sharply, with spot market discounts expanding to a record level of more than USD 200 per ounce."

Silver, however, declined Rs 900 to Rs 2,96,600 per kilogram, ending its three-day winning streak —*PTI*

Sugar stocks turn bitter; plunges 7 pc

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Shares of sugar companies declined up to 7 per cent on Thursday following the government's immediate ban on sugar exports until 30 September, aimed at increasing domestic availability and controlling prices.

On the BSE, Dhampur Sugar Mills fell 6.95 per cent, Dwarikesh Sugar Industries 6.65 per cent, and Uttam Sugar Mills 5.60 per cent. Bajaj Hindusthan Sugar declined 4.95 per cent, Mawana Sugars 4.83 per cent, and Dalmia Bharat Sugar and Industries 3.98 per cent.

Other declines included Triveni Engineering & Industries (-3.85 per cent), Rajshree Sugars & Chemicals (-3.42 per cent), Sakthi Sugars (-2.92 per cent), Balrampur Chini Mills (-2.52 per cent), and Shree Renuka Sugars (-2.13 per cent). Shares of Avadh Sugar & Energy fell 1.76 per cent, EID Parry India 1.64 per cent. Meanwhile, benchmark indices rose, with the BSE Sensex up 522.64 points (0.70 per cent) to 75,131.62 and the NSE Nifty gaining 95.65 points (0.41 per cent) to 23,508.25.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade announced that sugar exports, previously restricted with licences, are now prohibited until further notice, except for exports to the EU and US under special arrangements. The move has received criticism by industry leaders.

Senior NCP (SP) leader Jayant Patil stated, "The decision, taken without any concrete prior planning, would deal a double blow to sugar mills in Maharashtra," warning it could push the sector into a crisis. —*PTI*

Karnataka, Chile talk tech, green energy collaboration

BENGALURU, 14 MAY

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge met a high-level delegation from Chile, led by Chilean Foreign Minister Francisco Perez Mackenna, at Vidhana Soudha on Thursday.

The meeting focused on opportunities in renewable energy, including green hydrogen and sustainable industrial innovation. Other potential areas of collaboration included marine biotechnology, aquaculture technologies, and AI applications across traditional industries.

According to a statement, the discussions highlighted strong alignment between Chile's evolving technology-led growth strategy and Karnataka's leadership in innovation and deep-tech ecosystems.

The state IT minister said Karnataka has emerged as a global hub for deep-tech, AI, biotech, aerospace, and advanced research, supported by one of the world's strongest talent pipelines.

Officials said the engagement builds on the Letter of Intent signed between the Government of Karnataka and the Government of Chile during the Bengaluru Tech Summit.

The letter established a framework for collaboration in startups, emerging technologies, research, and skill development under the Global Innovation Alliance. —*PTI*

BHARTI TELECOM

Mittal wants majority in Airtel; will pass reigns to kids in 10 yrs

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Founder and chairman of Bharti Enterprises, **Sunil Bharti Mittal** said he plans to hand over the reins of Bharti Airtel to his children within the next decade. He also expressed a desire for promoter firm Bharti Telecom to regain over 50 per cent stake in the company.

The Mittal family, along with Singtel Group, currently hold a 40.47 per cent stake in Airtel. However, Mittal believes that the shareholding in Airtel can be raised within the next 3-4 years.

Singtel holds a 7 per cent direct stake in Airtel and had about 6 per cent to bridge. Once the transaction is complete and shares are issued, that gap will narrow to 3.6 per cent against the 51 per cent target. The overall shortfall will reduce dramatically, and Singtel — which has been selling down its direct stake — will now need to offload far less than previously anticipated, Mittal said.

The promoter firms, including Bharti Telecom, the Mittal family holding firm Indian Continent Investment, the Singtel Group firm Pastel, and others, jointly hold a 48.87 per cent stake in Airtel. Bharti Enterprises Holding has a 50.56 per cent stake and Singtel has a 49.44 per cent stake in Bharti Telecom.

Mittal, whose term as Chairman was set to expire in September, has been reappointed for five years till 2031. During Airtel's Q4 earnings call on Thursday, Mittal said raising Bharti Telecom's stake in Airtel by 10 percentage points would require roughly Rs 1 lakh crore. —*ANI*

EV PUSH: HONDA RECORDS FIRST EVER YEARLY LOSS

TOKYO, 14 MAY

Honda reported a loss of USD 2.7 billion on Thursday, the first-ever full-year loss for the company.

The Japanese automaker said losses related to its EV operations are estimated to total USD 16 billion.

As a result, Honda has abandoned its EV model plans, including those under a current joint venture with Sony.

Analysts say Honda might have been too ambitious with EV plans. "EV demand has declined considerably, due to the rollback of environmental regulations in the US and other factors," Honda said in a statement.

Even as the war in Iran drives gas prices higher, the Trump administration has pulled back on EV incentives. Overturning California's strict EV mandates and maintaining a 15 per cent tariff on imported auto parts, Trump's policies have dented Honda's bottom line. —*PTI*

RBI to auction Rs 32K cr govt securities

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will conduct an underwriting auction on Friday to sell Government Securities worth Rs 32,000 crore, with the entire amount covered in the underwriting process.

According to the RBI, the auction will follow a multiple price-based method, allowing participants to submit bids at different price levels for long-term government securities.

The securities on offer include the '6.36 per cent GS 2031' worth Rs 21,000 crore and the 'New GS 2066' worth Rs 11,000 crore.

Under the underwriting framework, only RBI-authorised Primary Dealers (PDs) can participate. The process is aimed at ensuring the full subscription of government bond issuances and reducing uncertainty over market demand.

The RBI said PDs must submit bids for the Additional Competitive Underwriting (ACU) auction electronically through its Core Banking Solution, the e-Kuber system, between 9am and 9.30am on the auction day.

The auction will be conducted under the underwriting commitment scheme notified in 2007. The underwriting commission will be credited to PDs' current accounts the day securities are issued. —*ANI*

India mulls tax cuts on foreign bonds

The Finance Ministry is considering cutting taxes on foreign investments in domestic bonds to curb rupee depreciation, Bloomberg News reported on Thursday. The move was proposed by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to align policies with global norms and encourage foreign inflows. Foreign investors currently face a 20 per cent tax and must pay capital gains tax, which is high compared to other markets. India imports 90 per cent of its crude, causing the rupee to face sustained pressure in recent sessions due to elevated crude oil prices and persistent foreign portfolio outflows amid West Asia war. The 10-year benchmark bond yield declined 2 bps to 7.03 per cent after Bloomberg's report.

Aparna clinches gold in women's 52kg category

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Indian wushu player Aparna clinched a gold medal in the women's 52kg category in the 11th Sanda World Cup in Macau on Thursday.

Aparna beat reigning world champion Thi Phuong Nga Ngo of Vietnam in straight sets in the final.

This was India's first gold in the event, which began on 12 May, according to the Wushu Association of India.

It was a sweet revenge for Aparna, who had lost to the same opponent in the final at the World Wushu Championships in September 2025 in Brazil.

Competitive wushu is split into two main branches Taolu and Sanda.

Taolu is a combination of gymnastics and martial arts, and competitors are judged and given points on their movements.—*PTI*

Ajith shines in Asian Weightlifting C'ships with bronze

GANDHINAGAR, 14 MAY

India continued its impressive campaign at the Asian Senior Weightlifting Championships as Ajith Narayana delivered a remarkable performance to secure a bronze medal each in both clean & jerk and overall in the men's 71kg category here on Thursday.

Competing against some of Asia's finest weightlifters, Ajith showcased exceptional strength and composure to register a total lift of 314 kg, including 174 kg effort in clean & jerk, to earn India a place on the podium.

The gold medal in the category was won by Korean Won Ju Ri (Korea) with a total lift of 351 kg, while China's Jian Chen claimed silver with an aggregate of 335 kg.—*PTI*

Nikhat Zareen out of contention for CWG

PATIALA, 14 MAY

Two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen suffered a shock exit from the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games trials here on Thursday, even as a majority of the boxers welcomed the return of the trial-based selection system. Nikhat, the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games champion and 2023 Hangzhou Asian Games bronze medallist, went down 1-4 via split decision to Sakshi Chaudhary in the 51kg semifinals in the opening bout of the day. The Boxing Federation of India was forced to revert to the trial-based selection process after the Sports Authority of India (SAI) suspended its earlier assessment-based evaluation system on Sunday, calling it "opaque".—*PTI*

-PTI

I am studying my own videos: Renuka Singh

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

India fast-bowling spearhead Renuka Singh Thakur on Thursday said she has been putting in efforts, including studying her own videos from the past to rediscover swing bowling after a tough tour of South Africa last month. The world No. 3 Indian team suffered a huge 1-4 defeat in the five-match T20I series against South Africa in a crucial away assignment in the build-up to the T20 World Cup next month in England. Renuka, too, had found it tough as she managed a mere two wickets in four matches. I practise every day, but it's not like I swing the ball every time. I struggled a lot with my bowling when I played in South Africa. But now I have a time of 10-15 days to bring my swing back.—*PTI*

CSK look to continue playoffs push against LSG

CSK is currently placed 5th with 6 wins from 11 matches

LUCKNOW, 14 MAY

Still in the hunt for a playoff berth despite an erratic campaign, Chennai Super Kings will look to continue their recent resilient run when they take on the already-eliminated Lucknow Super Giants in an IPL match here on Friday.

While CSK have managed to stay afloat with timely wins in the second half of the season, LSG's campaign has unravelled due to a string of ordinary performances.

For Chennai, the equation remains straightforward: win the remaining matches and hope other results end up in their favour. CSK are currently placed fifth in the pecking order with six wins from 11 matches.

Despite frequent criticism over their lack of finishing firepower, the five-time champions have shown fight through crucial contributions from Sanju Samson, Urvil Patel, captain Ruturaj Gaikwad and a few other emerging players.

Young batter Urvil's fearless approach at the top has added much-needed momentum to CSK's powerplay scoring. On Friday, Shivam Dube, Kartik Sharma and Dewald Brevis also have key roles to play in the middle overs on a surface expected to aid stroke-making.

The bowling unit, however, has received a big blow recently with all-rounder Jamie Overton ruled out of the remainder of IPL due to a thigh injury and returning to the UK for further assessment.

This significant blow affects CSK's playoff push, marking yet another injury setback this season.

Chennai Super Kings' players during an Indian Premier League T20 cricket match against Lucknow Super Giants -*PTI*

CSK VS LSG @ Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow
7.30 pm IST

CSK names Dian Forrester as replacement

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) suffered another injury blow in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL 2026) as all-rounder Jamie Overton has been ruled out for the remainder of the season due to a right thigh injury. South Africa's Dian Forrester will join CSK for INR 75 lakh as a replacement for Overton.—*PTI*

Three IPL captains likely to lose leadership roles after disastrous campaigns

Three IPL captains are in the line of fire due to campaigns that have been nothing short of disastrous, and they could end up losing their jobs when the season winds up later this month, sources tracking developments in various franchises have indicated. Axar Patel, Ajinkya Rahane, and Rishabh Pant have captained for two successive seasons and failed miserably in their bid to take their respective teams into the playoffs. Only the Lucknow Super Giants are officially eliminated, making Pant the biggest fall guy of back-to-back poor seasons. But for all practical purposes, Kolkata Knight Riders, led by Rahane and Delhi Capitals helmed by Axar, are also unlikely to be around during the business end of the high-profile league. Axar's numbers as captain and player make for poor reading. He has scored only 100 runs in nine innings at a strike-rate of 112.50, with 56 coming in one innings and the remaining 44 aggregated across eight knocks despite batting mostly in the top-five. In 12 games, Axar has bowled only 36 overs, exactly three overs per game, and picked up 10 wickets at an economy rate of 8.08.

VIRAT POWER

Kohli has silenced doubters with century: Gavaskar

RAIPUR, 14 MAY

Batting maestro Virat Kohli proved that the "old generation is still the best" with his unbeaten century against Kolkata Knight Riders, former India captain Sunil Gavaskar said while lavishing praise on the Royal Challengers Bengaluru star for silencing doubters in the ongoing IPL.

Coming off two successive ducks, the 37-year-old Kohli smashed an unbeaten hundred to guide Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a six-wicket win over KKR and move to the top of the points table here on Wednesday.

"Virat Kohli was absolutely outstanding against KKR. He knows how to construct a chase better than most," Gavaskar said on Star Sports' Amul Cricket Live.

"While everyone was talking about this being the season of 'Gen Next', Kohli showed he is still around. He silenced the doubters with a century and moved to third in the Orange Cap race. He proved that the old generation is still the best."

Gavaskar highlighted Kohli's staggering consistency in the shortest format and said his records may stand untouched for a long time.

"When it comes to T20 centuries, he is third on the list with 10, behind Chris Gayle and Babar Azam. But he is the fastest to 14,000 T20 runs and has nine IPL hundreds. Records are there to be broken, but it will take a very long time for anyone to match what Kohli keeps delivering, game after game, season after season," he said."This hundred from Virat Kohli was one of those special moments that remind us of his greatness." —*PTI*

Soyez replaces Sreejesh as junior men's hockey team coach

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

India on Thursday officially appointed decorated Frenchman Frederic Soyez as the chief coach of the national junior men's hockey team, replacing two-time Olympic medallist PR Sreejesh.

Sreejesh, a former star goalkeeper, was removed from his role just after 17 months following the expiry of his contract after guiding India to a bronze medal finish at last year's FIH Junior World Cup in Chennai and Madurai.

In a strongly worded social media post, Sreejesh vented out his frustration, saying his tenure was brought to an end despite winning five medals in as many tournaments during his stint, but Hockey India argued that the decision was taken considering the long-term vision of building a sustainable high-performance ecosystem aligned with India's ambitions for hosting the 2036 Olympic Games.

One of the most accomplished coaches in European hockey, Soyez brings over three decades of elite coaching experience, including 15 years as an international player for France and over 15 years as a head coach at the highest level.

Soyez, who enjoyed an illustrious playing career with France from 1995 to 2010, earning 196 international caps and scoring an impressive 195 goals for the team, coached the national men's hockey teams of both France and Spain. He has coaching experience at three Olympic Games. —*PTI*

SL TRI-SERIES

Sooryavanshi named in India A squad, Tilak Varma to lead side

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Teenage batting prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was on Thursday named in the 15-member India A squad for the tri-nation 50-over series in Sri Lanka, starting 9 June. Tilak Varma to lead the side

Apart from the hosts, the other team in the tournament is Afghanistan A. The matches will be played in Dambulla. India A will also play two multi-day (4-day) 'Tests' in Galle, but the squad for that will be announced later.

It is understood that Sooryavanshi has been included as selectors wanted to give him a chance to check him out with the Pathways squad (India A) before he is picked for the senior team for the upcoming tour of the United Kingdom (Ireland and England) starting 26 June. The tri-nation series ends on 21 June.

A look at the 15-member squad indicates that the average age of the team is around 23 years. Only the pace bowlers Arshad Khan, Yudhvir Singh and Yash Thakur are the ones who are above 25 years of age. None of the players in the squad is above 30, and all have been performers in the Vijay Hazare Trophy (National One Day Championship) apart from being contracted with an IPL squad.

The spinners include Dubey, Shedge, and Vipraj Nigam, while Prabhsimran and Kumar Kushagra are the two wicketkeepers.

India A will play Sri Lanka A (9 and 15 June) and Afghanistan A (11 June and 17) twice, and the top two teams will meet in the final slated on 21 June.

India A squad for the tri-series: Tilak Varma (Captain), Priyansh Arya, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Riyan Parag (Vice-Captain), Ayush Badoni, Nishant Sindhu, Harsh Dubey, Suryansh Shedge, Prabhsimran Singh (WK), Kumar Kushagra (WK), Vipraj Nigam, Yash Thakur, Yudhvir Singh, Anshul Kamboj, Arshad Khan. —*PTI*

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and Tilak Verma -*PTI*

Sinner breaks Djokovic's Masters 1000 winning streak record

ROME, 14 MAY

Jannik Sinner reached the semifinals of the Italian Open on Thursday after beating Andrey Rublev and setting a new record for consecutive wins in Masters 1000 tournaments. Another straight-sets victory, this time 6-2, 6-4 over Rublev, took Sinner to 32 straight wins in the ATP's top-ranked events, one more than the previous record set by Novak Djokovic in 2011.

"I don't play for records, I play just for my own story," Sinner said on court.

"At the same time, it means a lot to me, but tomorrow is another day, another opponent, a different opponent."

Rublev was Sinner's first seeded opponent at this year's tournament in Rome, and the World No. 1 made short work of the task in front of a delighted centre court crowd.

On Friday, Sinner is likely to face Daniil Medvedev, the 2023 champion at the Foro Italico, with the seventh seed taking on lucky loser Martin Landaluce in the first match of the evening session.

Sinner looks near unbeatable at the moment and, with his great rival Carlos Alcaraz out injured, is the favourite to become the first Italian to win the Rome title in five decades. —*PTI*

Super Chess Classic: Praggnanandhaa to take on Firouzja in opener

BUCHAREST, 14 MAY

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa will take on Alireza Firouzja of France in the first round of the Super Chess Classic here, the first classical event of the year, as part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Left as the lone Indian in the fray following the withdrawal of world champion D Gukesh from the classical format this year, Praggnanandhaa drew a favourable number. He will get five white games out of nine rounds in the 10-player all-play-all event.

For the record, the total prize pool of the event is USD 350000 with an additional USD 125000 as a bonus. The first prize here is USD 100000. The Indian needs an improved show following a mediocre outing in the last Candidates' tournament in April, and has dropped to number 16 in world rankings in live ratings.

Fabiano Caruana of the United States starts as the top seed and is slated to meet in-form Jorden van Foreest of the Netherlands in the opener.

Van Foreest had sensationally beaten world number one Magnus Carlsen of Norway in the just-concluded Te Pe Sigeman chess tournament, and has been quite consistent in recent times, and is number 20 in the world rankings.—*PTI*

-PTI

THAILAND OPEN

PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen enter quarters

BANGKOK, 14 MAY

Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen advanced to the quarterfinals of the USD 500,000 Thailand Open Super 500 tournament with straight-game wins in their respective matches here on Thursday.

Two-time Olympic medallist and sixth seed Sindhu needed just 28 minutes to outclass Denmark's Amalie Schulz 21-13, 21-15 in the women's singles second round.

Seventh seed Lakshya, the 2021 World Championships bronze medallist, defeated China's Zhu Xuan Chen 21-12, 21-13 in a men's singles clash that lasted 39 minutes.

Sindhu will next face top seed and world No. 3 Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, while Lakshya will take on Thailand's second seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn.

India's top-seeded men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also marched into the last-eight stage with a 21-12, 21-19 win over Malaysia's Bryan Jeremy Goonting and Muhammad Haikal in 44 minutes.

The world No. 4 Indian duo will next meet the sixth-seeded Japanese combination of Takumi Nomura and Yuichi Shimogami.

However, former world No. 1 Kidambi Srikanth crashed out after going down 16-21, 21-11, 18-21 to Chinese Taipei's world No. 47 Su Li Yang in a hard-fought contest lasting one hour and 10 minutes.

It was also the end of the road for young Devika Sihag, who had clinched her maiden Super 300 title at the Thailand Masters earlier this year. She lost 21-23, 11-21 to Thailand's Pitchamon Opatniputh. —*PTI*

Alaves end champions Barca's bid for 100-point record

LONDON, 14 MAY

Newly-crowned Spanish champions Barcelona suffered a 1-0 defeat by Alaves on Wednesday night, ending their bid to match the all-time La Liga record points total of 100. Ibrahim Diabate's goal in first-half stoppage time earned Alaves a vital victory in their battle against relegation, taking Quique Sanchez Flores's team out of the drop zone and up to 15th.

"It was not an easy game, they (battled) in a hard way, but it's OK because they are fighting to stay in La Liga and this is normal," Flick told reporters.

"We let in the goal in the last minute of the first half... but for me it's more the positives (I'll take), the young players who played today and managing the minutes (for the others)." Flick gave 21-year-old centre-back Alvaro Cortes his debut, among several changes to the side that won the Clasico on Sunday to clinch back-to-back league titles.

The Catalans celebrated winning La Liga on Monday with an open-top bus parade, and their performance reflected that to some extent. —*PTI*